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# Anthologizing Modernism: New Verse Anthologies, 1913-53

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

ANTHOLOGIZING MODERNISM:  
NEW VERSE ANTHOLOGIES, 1913-53

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY

W. SCOTT CHENEY

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For my family,  
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INTRODUCTION  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY POETRY ANTHOLOGIES AND TWENTIETH  
CENTURY INNOVATION

A pile of poetry anthologies sat on the desk of a borrowed study carrel at the Northwestern University library when I began my research in 2009. Most of the anthologies were from the nineteenth century—some, like Allan Ramsay’s 1711 *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, far earlier. When I opened the dark green cover of an 1863 edition of Frances Turner Palgrave’s *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, I noticed that the publisher had embellished the title page and section headings with floral insignias and crests (not to mention butterflies, vases, and bells).<sup>1</sup> These embellishments were not the only feature that made this edition noteworthy. When I opened the book, I found actual flowers pressed between many of the pages of the anthology, and some of the other pages revealed grease marks in the shapes of flowers. The physical remains of these flowers summon pleasant images of a relaxed reader who may have read the book in a spring meadow or a cultivated garden, using the anthology pages to preserve flowers from his or her surroundings. However the previous reader actually interacted with the text, the connection between poetry anthologies and flowers also exists on another level. Barbara Korte explains that the term

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<sup>1</sup> This is a change from the first edition of Palgrave’s famous anthology, which came out in July of 1861 and is discussed below. The call number for this particular edition at Northwestern University is 821.04 P16 1863.

“anthology” itself comes from the “Greek *anthos* = flower and *legein* = to gather”; thus anthologies are a kind of literary bouquet (“Flowers” 2). The poems Palgrave chose to include in his *Golden Treasury* were selected for their beauty and lasting value; in much the same way, this particular reader selected especially beautiful flowers to place between the pages of Palgrave’s anthology.<sup>2</sup>

The form of poetry anthologies was not a new idea in the nineteenth century; in fact, the history of the form goes back thousands of years to what is often called the *Greek Anthology*—a modern term and not the title of one ancient work.<sup>3</sup> Though there are fragments of earlier collections, Meleager of Gadara’s *Stephanos* (or *Garland*) is the first known poetry anthology and dates to approximately 100 BC (Greene 53). Anthologies of English poetry begin in 1557 with Richard Tottel’s *Songes and Sonnettes*, commonly known as “Totell’s Miscellany.” It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century, however, that single-volume poetry anthologies became popular.<sup>4</sup> This development

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<sup>2</sup> William Stanley Braithwaite’s 1904 sonnet “On a Pressed Flower in My Copy of Keats” draws upon the apparently common practice of pressing flowers in books of poetry. The first four lines read: “As Keats’ old honeyed volume of romance / I oped to-day to drink its Latmos air, / I found all pressed a white flower lying where / The shepherd lad watched Pan’s herd slow advance” (*Lyrics* 37). The famous collection he references was *The Poetical Works of John Keats* (1884). Another book shows the prevalence of pressing flowers and was called *Leaf and Flower Pictures, and How to Make Them*. This book came out in 1860 and included chapters called “The Best Mode of Pressing Leaves” and “Directions for Selecting and Pressing Flowers,” both of which suggest placing flowers between the pages of books (H.B.).

<sup>3</sup> Many early twentieth-century poets refer to the *Greek Anthology* in its translated form, the most popular version of which was J.W. Mackail’s 1890 *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*. This collection went through six editions, the last one appearing in 1938.

<sup>4</sup> The terms “miscellany” and “anthology” are not interchangeable. In fact, Laura Mandell and Rita Raley claim that anthologies contain “poems of excellence” rather than the “poems of interest” one might find in a miscellany. (Their site helpfully links to and explains nineteenth-century anthologies.) Even so, their point is not always true in the twentieth century. My time in the archives reveals that “anthology” was used frequently for collections of either excellent poems or humorous poems, and that the term “anthology” held a stronger currency in the twentieth century than the word “miscellany.” Though it does not accurately reflect the actual word usage of the time, Google’s Ngram viewer begins to demonstrate this reality. The word “miscellany” fell out of use as “anthology” began to be used much more in the early twentieth

changed the methods editors used and the constraints they faced when organizing a collection. The poems collected already had a history and were accepted as influential artifacts of the past, but the single-volume editor could not be comprehensive in the way that a multi-volume editor could. As we will see, these anthologies were wildly successful and made a fortune for editors and publishing houses. During the 1910s, however, another practice began to emerge. Flying in the face of the profitable nineteenth-century model, poets began to edit their own poetry anthologies, which were filled with new poems and unknown poets. These New Verse anthologies changed poetry publication forever. More than any other medium of the time, New Verse anthologies not only produced and codified poetry movements that are still discussed today but also had the power to effect wider cultural changes.

### **The Reach of Nineteenth-Century Poetry Anthologies**

There is a long tradition of poetry anthologies in English that attempt to document poetry in the widest and most enduring ways. The anthologist is often seen as a historian to future generations, even a guardian of truth and beauty. During the nineteenth century, poetry compilations also acted as tokens of high-cultural sophistication; they were sold to families as reference books that took up room on the shelves of home libraries and were often purchased more for looks or prestige than for reading pleasure. Over two centuries after Tottel's collection was published in 1557, three anthologies of this kind were common in nineteenth-century homes: Samuel Johnson's seventy-two volume *Works of the English Poets*, Robert Southey's *Annual Anthology*, and three different versions of

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century, especially in the 1910s and 1920s. These results, of course, can be skewed by what books (and libraries) Google chooses to scan. See Ted Underwood's "How to Not Do Things with Words."



*The Works of the British Poets*.<sup>5</sup> With their many volumes, gold covers, and comprehensive contents, these books were meant to address various readers' poetic expectations while taking up conspicuous shelf space.

As mid-century drew near, Leigh Hunt published the first popular single-volume poetry anthology, *Imagination and Fancy* (1844). The collection's full title shows that Hunt wanted the book to be a guide to his readers: *Imagination and Fancy; or, Selections from the English Poets. Illustrative of Those First Requisites of Their Art; With Markings of the Best Passages, Critical Notices of the Writers, and an Essay in Answer to the Question: "What is Poetry?"* Hunt's collection acted as a kind of teacher, what Korte calls an "academically oriented collection" (2). Hunt interacts with each poem in the collection and describes how the poems are "*commented, and marked with italics, on a principle of co-perusal*, as though the Editor were reading the passages in their company" (iii; emphasis in original). Considering the popularity of the anthology, many readers must have enjoyed reading Hunt's thoughts about the poems. Hunt prepares the reader for each poem and interprets important passages for readers. *Imagination and Fancy* was the most popular poetry anthology of the time, going through three editions in London and four editions in New York in just the first six years of publication.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson's collection was first published in London in 1779, and it went through three editions and six printings, with the latest in 1810. Southey's collection first came out in London in 1799. Three different editors came out with collections under the title *The Works of the British Poets*. These works included Robert Anderson's 1792 London edition (one edition and four printings), Ezekiel Sanford's 1819 Philadelphia version (one edition and three printings), and John Aikin's 1820 London collection (seven editions over thirty years).

<sup>6</sup> Hunt's collection, printed in London by Smith, Elder, and Co. and in New York by Wiley and Putnam, went through three editions in its first three years of publication. In total, it went through nine editions, with the last one coming out in 1910.

The linear layout of the collection can feel heavy-handed because each poem is discussed before, (sometimes) during, and directly after the poem, which makes the practice of skipping from poem to poem unwieldy. Hunt's approach, however, also invites readers to interact with his conclusions on an intellectual level, even to the point of dialoging with him by means of notes written in the margins. An 1845 copy of *Imagination and Fancy* is probably the most obvious example of the kind of reading Hunt's anthology encouraged in his readers.<sup>7</sup> In responding to Hunt's assertion that "It is certainly a high instance of modern imagination, this venturing to make a pleasure-garden out of the flowers of pain" (which is an explanation of Spenser's line "The garden of Proserpina this hight"), this reader writes,

It shows a deeper truth, I think, than Mr. Hunt seems to have detected, for it shows the subtile alchemy of our spiritual & rational nature, which has power actually to transmute any circumstances into means of improvement, progress, & enjoyment, so powerful is this nature of ours that I cannot believe absolute pain & nothing else are to be permanently possible. Milton, [note continues in bottom margin] in his *Paradise Lost*, seems to me to have demonstrated this truth with still greater power & beauty, especially in his 1<sup>st</sup>. & 2<sup>nd</sup>. Books—where he gives the debates in Pandemonium & describes the pursuits & amusements of the fallen angels during this great leader's visit to Earth.

Here we see an expansion of and a correction to Hunt's guidance. The reader used both the top and bottom margins to enter into dialogue on this point of pleasurable pain. The Milton reference shows high learning and a desire to bring together past readings. It is almost as if this reader were a teacher who wanted to converse with Hunt—an opportunity that would not have been available if Hunt had not commented so substantially on the poetry. Another reader who was similarly affected by this collection

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<sup>7</sup> This copy is housed at the Northwestern Library under the call number 821.08 H94.4.

was Amy Lowell. But rather than interacting with the text as a fellow teacher, she was an eager student. She found the book in her father's library as a teenager, and the collection was a big part of what inspired her to pursue a career in poetry (Bradshaw, *Amy Lowell* 49). Lowell writes, "Browsing about one day, I found Leigh Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy*. I did not read it, I devoured it. I read it over and over" (*Poetry and Poets* 53). She found in Hunt a competent teacher. The poems were a foundation for her poetic knowledge and creations, and Hunt's editing must have influenced her own later anthology collections.

When Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* came out in 1861, it quickly surpassed the popularity of Hunt's anthology and became the model that future poetry anthologies would measure themselves against. Where Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy* guided reader interpretation and discouraged skipping from one poem to another, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* allowed readers to hunt and read poems at their will. The work is best described as an "open" anthology because it allows readers to use the text for their own purposes with very little intrusion from the editor. The textual organization of the book foregrounds the poems themselves rather than the editor's ideas about them—the poems are all presented without comment. To say that Palgrave's anthology was popular would be an extreme understatement. Though it was first published in 1861 in London, by 1863 Sever and Francis in Cambridge, MA noted that the anthology had "already met with favorable reception, the first American edition having been exhausted in a month after publication, while in England its sale has amounted to 12,000 copies."<sup>8</sup> When the second

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<sup>8</sup> This copy is also held by the Northwestern Library with the call number 821.04 P16 1863.

edition from Macmillan came out in London in 1891, there had already been twenty-three reprintings since the original (including three in 1861 and two in 1883). After fifty years of these kinds of publications, “golden treasury” had become a household term that was even used in advertisements. One ad describes a book about house plans as “a golden treasury of the newest things for the homelover” (Craftsman).

The open format allowed the *Golden Treasury* to affect a wide range of readers. Instead of using the book to make intellectual comments or even to press flowers, one reader took it to war. The story of the book and its owner is well documented by the Newberry Library in Chicago. Alexander C. McClurg began working at the S.C. Griggs bookstore in 1859 before leaving to fight in the Civil War. Returning to Chicago as a general, McClurg went to work for the bookstore again and ended up buying it after the Chicago Fire of 1871. By 1880, A.C. McClurg & Co. was one of the country’s largest book distributors (Hinderliter).<sup>9</sup> McClurg’s “Brief Sketch of the History of this Copy of Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*” accompanies his copy of the book and reveals that “For three years this little book was constantly ‘at the front.’” The open format of the book must have allowed McClurg to read one or two poems when time allowed. After its time at war, the book became an almost sacred artifact and was rebound to emphasize its new role as a symbolic object, which also erases its original cover and the corresponding historical details. According to the Newberry Library, this copy was bound by T. J. Cobden-Sanderson at the Doves Bindery with “green goatskin with yapp foreedges, gold

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<sup>9</sup> McClurg also wrote a memoir about his time in the war, primarily for his friends and family. Part of this unpublished manuscript was reprinted after his death with the permission of his son, Ogden T. McClurg. The book was called *Reminiscences of Chicago During the Civil War*, and McClurg’s excerpt was titled “American Volunteer Soldier” (McIlvaine).

tooled pattern of tulips, rose leaves and hearts, edges gilt and gauffered.” The Newberry Library named their museum bookstore after McClurg and emphasize the book’s sacred position by placing it as the first exhibit every visitor to the library encounters: enclosed in glass near the front door, the book is lit to emphasize its beautiful gilt cover.

The influence of Palgrave’s collection reached far into the twentieth century. Marjorie Perloff writes, “Indeed, by the turn of the century, for most would-be practitioners of the craft in England and America, poetry meant Palgrave” (178). As Dennis Taylor shows, Thomas Hardy was one of the earliest to be inspired by and to spend countless hours studying the collection. His wife said, “His only ambition, so far as he could remember, was to have some poem or poems in a good anthology like the *Golden Treasury*” (165). Similarly, William Carlos Williams says he “knew Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury* by heart” (*I Wanted* 8). He also admits that much of his early poetry was influenced by Pound “but even more by Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*” (16). Paul Mariani even calls it a “touchstone” for Williams, an “Ur-text resplendent” (11). George Lensing points out that Wallace Stevens “gathered an extensive library of clothbound books, inscribed his name and date in most of them, marked them thoroughly, and preserved many of them for the rest of his life. In his copy of Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*, he underlined and marked vertically in the margin[s]” (74). The Robert Frost Encyclopedia states that the *Golden Treasury* was “the most crucial learning experience he had as a student” (Tuten 198); also, he later wrote that “he liked everything in Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*” (Newdick 44). Ezra Pound, on the other hand, called Palgrave “that stinking sugar teat” (Perloff 178) and was moved to edit numerous

anthologies because he believed the poetry world needed “something to replace that dodgier Palgrave” (Stock 201).

### **The State of the Field**

Given the popularity and influence of modernist poetry anthologies, it is surprising to discover that little research has been done either to theorize the New Verse anthology as an autonomous literary object or to examine the archival contexts of the anthology as a culturally embedded material object. In 2000, Barbara Korte noted that “[S]cholarly interest in (poetry) anthologies . . . seems to be growing, addressing not only traditional questions of literary studies but also and especially the wider cultural impact that anthologies have always had” (“Flowers” 2). There has been enough scholarly work done on anthologies in the last fifteen years to substantiate Korte’s claim. In the time since Korte made this statement in 2000, the *MLA International Bibliography* displays a substantial increase in the number of journal articles, book chapters, and dissertations published under the subject “anthologies” when compared to the previous thirteen years. Even so, the study of modernist New Verse anthologies in particular remains a very small field.<sup>10</sup>

A handful of critics have taken up the English poetry anthology in substantial studies, however. Alan C. Golding writes about canon formation and presents a broad history of twentieth-century poetry anthologies in his book *From Outlaw to Classic: Canons in American Poetry* (1995). Golding’s work provides a good overview of an entire epoch of which this project’s focus is a short episode. Five years later, Aldon

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<sup>10</sup> John Nichols, Jane Marek, and Tess Chakkalakal each write about New Verse anthologies—Pound’s, Lowell’s, and Johnson’s respectively. I respond to each article here in the corresponding chapters.

Nielson edited *Reading Race in American Poetry* (2000), which highlighted “overlooked figures” from twentieth-century poetry and connected a lack of “national belonging” to the ways many African-American poets were left out of popular anthologies. Anne Ferry’s *Tradition and the Individual Poem* (2001) focuses on the way an anthology “writes literary history” and how editors “direct” their readers, by examining Tottel’s *Songes and Sonnettes*, Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*. These authors skillfully use the cultural contexts to analyze the ways editors and publishers selected poems, thus providing a strong foundation for what I do here.

The important work that is being done in the field of periodical studies provides a crucial backdrop to my project, especially in light of the fact that many of the anthologies I examine were created by little magazine editors. Mark Morrison’s *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception* (2001) shows how the common assumption that modernists eschewed commercial print venues to publish “for coteries in little magazines” is misguided, and though it addresses the print histories of six little magazines, Morrison’s work helpfully addresses the era and publication milieu in which New Verse anthologies were created. In fact, he writes that “mass market publishing, advertising, and consumer culture coalesced as the dominant cultural apparatus for the century in the 1920s, and little magazines were the perennial alternative form of publication” (205). New Verse anthologies were another popular alternative in both the 1910s and 1920s, and some poetry anthologies—like Harriet Monroe’s *The New Poetry* and James Weldon Johnson’s *The Book of American Negro Poetry*—went through multiple editions and had significant and lasting cultural impact.

In its “The Changing Profession” department in 2006, *PMLA* published “The Rise of Periodical Studies,” a seminal essay by Sean Latham and Robert Scholes. Latham and Scholes begin by stating, “Literary and historical disciplines engaged with the study of modern culture are finding in periodicals both a new resource and a pressing challenge to existing paradigms for investigation” (517). They also point out that “This work can best be performed in a genuinely interdisciplinary or even multi-disciplinary context capable of encouraging and integrating new kinds of research” (529). This essay is a useful blueprint for the new field and also overlaps with my project in its attempt to study the little magazines, making it necessary for my study of anthologies. Suzanne Churchill’s *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (2006) and her edited volume with Adam McKible, *Little Magazines and Modernism* (2008), are examples of the kind of work that Latham and Scholes had in mind. These works show how little magazines “acted as open, heterogeneous social settings in which writers of various races, nationalities, and classes read and responded to each other’s work” (Churchill, *Little* 2). It is this kind of work in periodical studies that inspired my work on anthologies. In fact, these works by Morrison, Latham, Scholes, Churchill, and McKibble address the same era and individuals as my research, and I follow a similar methodology to theirs.

A change in the holdings of the Modernist Journals Project is an example of how my work overlaps with periodical studies and how the field has acknowledged the need for anthology research. Though the MJP has digitally reproduced large portions of important little magazines to modernism (like *Poetry* and *Others*), they recently released the collection “Some Imagist Anthologies” in 2013. The collection includes the three



instantiations of *Des Imagistes* (discussed here in ch. 1) and all three *Some Imagist Poets* anthologies (discussed in ch. 2). This may be evidence that the field is beginning to embrace the study and importance of anthologies. Even so, anthology studies remains a neglected field in spite of the proven influence of collections like the New Verse anthologies studied here. The power of New Verse anthology editors and the collections they produce, if truth be told, exceeded that of little magazine editors. New Verse anthologies brought together movements and affected culture in dynamic, wide, and enduring ways that no other form had the ability to achieve.

### Chapter Summaries

Though no twentieth-century publisher or editor could rival Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, they were still busy publishing anthologies in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was not until the second decade, however, that two New Verse anthologies came out that changed the way poetry was disseminated and read.<sup>11</sup> In the Jan. 1913 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, Ezra Pound started making references to an anthology that would first appear in early 1914 under the title *Des Imagistes*. At the same time Pound was preparing his audience for his first collection, William Stanley Braithwaite was collecting what he saw as the best magazine poetry for the year. At the end of year, Braithwaite published the *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1913*; this was the first New Verse anthology he

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<sup>11</sup> This list of New Verse anthologies from the 1910s demonstrates the popularity of the form: *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1913*; *Des Imagistes* (1913); *The Catholic Anthology* (1914); *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1914*; *Some Imagist Poets for 1915*; *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915*; *Some Imagist Poets for 1916*; *Others, An Anthology of the New Verse* (1916); *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1916*; *Some Imagist Poets for 1917*; *Others, An Anthology of the New Verse* (1917); *The New Poetry* (1917); *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1917*; *Victory!* (1918); *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1918*; *The Golden Treasury of Magazine Verse* (1918); *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1919*; and *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1920* (with subsequent volumes until 1929). Edward Marsh was also publishing the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies in London during this time (1912, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1922).

published in book form. These two editors act as bookends for this dissertation.

Pound's *Des Imagistes* is the primary and best example of the modernist New Verse anthology, and the first chapter discusses Pound and his groundbreaking anthology. The second chapter follows the publication of the ensuing New Verse anthologies—in particular, Amy Lowell's *Some Imagist Poets*, Alfred Kreymborg's *Others* anthologies, and Harriet Monroe's *The New Poetry*. The third and final chapter charts the rise of both Braithwaite and James Weldon Johnson in the 1910s and culminates in a close reading of Johnson's hugely influential *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922, 1931).

Chapter 1 focuses on Pound as he was beginning to make a name for himself in London in 1909-10. He met regularly with other poets at the meetings of the Poet's Club, where T.E. Hulme talked about his ideas about poetry and the presentation of the image. Pound mentioned this group in his 1912 *Ripostes*, and after this time, it became more and more obvious that he wanted to organize a new poetry movement. As the foreign correspondent for Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* in Chicago, Pound had a ready audience that would enjoy watching his movement materialize. Over the course of 1912 and 1913, Pound introduced his chosen poets to Monroe and expected them to be published in her magazine. Though she had said that her magazine would welcome all kinds of poetry and not favor any one group, she printed all of the poets Pound sent her. Pound's goal was to bring these poets together under the auspices of one movement, and he decided the best way to achieve this end was to use a New Verse anthology, publishing *Des Imagistes* in February of 1914. This anthology is at once serious, playful, and difficult—making it distinct from anything then on the market. In fact, Pound's collection was itself a work of modernist literature because his selections of poems and mysterious “documents” were

meant to confound readers rather than ingratiate them to the new movement. In spite of this unconventional approach, *Des Imagistes* codified the Imagist movement—even with all the confusion and controversy it deliberately created.

Chapter 2 explores the intellectual and artistic networks of three different poets who became editors after they saw the power of the New Verse anthology. These editors knew Pound directly and were more than familiar with *Des Imagistes*. Amy Lowell’s “In a Garden” had appeared in Pound’s *Des Imagistes*. Alfred Kreymborg was the first to publish *Des Imagistes* in his short-lived little magazine the *Glebe*. And Harriet Monroe gave Pound considerable power and influence over the early years of *Poetry*. Because each of these figures knew Pound, the anthologies they published were—in different ways—responses to *Des Imagistes*. Even so, chapter 2 focuses less on the way they moved away from Pound than on the ways in which each editor’s locale affected their respective collections. Lowell’s Boston, Kreymborg’s New York, and Monroe’s Chicago presented different challenges and expectations to each editor as they planned their anthologies and gathered poems. The communities where these editors lived were very different, and their anthologies reflect prevailing assumptions about race and class. The overarching narratives of each editor’s community often changed the meaning of the poetry between the covers of their collections (they each edited three editions). In other words, the values and assumptions of the communities in which they lived were the crucial factors for poetic reception and interpretation.

Chapter 3 picks up on changing ideas of race and poetry in the late 1910s. As we see in chapter 2, Kreymborg’s *Others* anthologies were the first collections from the dominant culture to provide space for African-American poets. This final chapter

describes the ways African Americans began to be published by looking at the ways Braithwaite and others started to publish their work during the 1910s. In particular, Braithwaite began to follow the work of Johnson as early as 1910, when Johnson's "Mother Night" appeared in the *Century*. Throughout the decade, the two corresponded and became close friends. Braithwaite was a mentor and a promoter of Johnson's poetry: he mentioned Johnson's new poems in his *Boston Transcript* articles, for example, and included him in his annual anthologies as early as 1915. Their relationship changed when the 1920s began, however. While Braithwaite's reputation and influence was waning, Johnson was entering into his most productive and profitable decade. He began collecting poems for *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, his most widely recognized work after *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). This chapter aims to resituate Braithwaite's place as a critic and editor of poetry while arguing that Johnson's collection was easily the most significant anthology of the twentieth century.

The conclusion to my dissertation will briefly show how, in the 1930s, modernist New Verse anthologies began to lose the power that they once had. Despite their dwindling currency for modernist practices, Richard Aldington unsuccessfully tried to use the New Verse anthology form to gather the old Imagist group together again sixteen years later (Pound and Lowell were notably absent). His *Imagist Anthology* (1930) tried to resurrect an old movement with the New Verse anthology form that most powerfully starts rather than reunites movements.<sup>12</sup> During the thirties and forties, in contrast, comprehensive anthologies were in high demand. The reading public wanted to read

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<sup>12</sup> Aldington's efforts did not catch on with publishers (two small presses picked up the book: Chatto & Windus in London and Covici & Friede in New York) or readers (the book was never reprinted).

books that gathered all the classic poems of modern poetry. Louis Untermeyer and Oscar Williams both successfully made a living collecting the poems of modernism for both students and the common reader. At the end of the 1950s, another editor used the New Verse anthology form to publish a virtually unknown group of poets, and the book provocatively started another movement. Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry 1945-1960* heralded the arrival of a new group of poets, including Alan Ginsberg, Kenneth Koch, Robert Creeley, Madeline Gleason, Barbara Guest, Frank O'Hara, and Jack Kerouac. The New Verse anthology was again being used to do what it does best: create and codify new movements.

## CHAPTER ONE

### EZRA POUND'S *DES IMAGISTES*: MYSTERY AND (IM)MATERIALITY IN THE FIRST NEW VERSE ANTHOLOGY

From the first mention of the term “Imagiste” in a “Prefatory Note” at the end of Ezra Pound’s 1912 *Ripostes*, to a short letter to Harriet Monroe in October 1912 about H.D.’s poetry, to Richard Aldington’s biographical note in the November 1912 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, and finally to its most famous early usage in the January 1913 issue of *Poetry*, the term and its corresponding movement have been examined and written about from virtually every angle. What has been almost completely overlooked in this research is the material publication of the Imagist movement and its specific link to the form of the poetry anthology.<sup>1</sup> The present research fills this gap and changes the way we think about the inception of modernist poetry and the beginnings of modernism in general. The current emphasis in periodical studies linking little magazines to the beginnings of modernist poetry foregrounds the important role of magazines like *Poetry*

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<sup>1</sup> The following major works on Pound all admit the importance of *Des Imagistes* without exploring why or how it became one of the earliest and most pivotal material objects of modernist poetry. In 1965, Patricia Hutchins wrote, “Pound, who published the *Des Imagistes* anthology of 1914, never claimed to have originated the movement” (137). In 1966, K.L. Goodwin wrote, “Pound was contemplating an anthology of Imagism [and] wanted a medium in which he would be the sole arbiter of taste” (12). J.B. Harmer’s 1975 discussion calls the anthology merely “an interesting collection of what Pound and his allies had achieved since his first announcement of Imagisme in *Poetry*” (37-8). In 1980 Peter Ackroyd mentioned (albeit in a photograph caption), “The list of contents from *Des Imagistes*, a volume edited by Pound which was published in 1914. The edition sold out. As Richard Aldington, one of the contributors, wrote later: ‘Evidently we were at least a success de’ scandale’” (27). In 1999, Ira B. Nadel mentioned the collection (the book edition): “The appearance of the slim, blue-bound anthology...confirmed the importance of the new movement” (2). Most recently in 2009, Helen Carr called it a “milestone” (697).

and *Drama*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *Egoist*, *Poetry Review*, *Others*, *Blast*, the *Little Review*, and the *Dial* in the creation and evolution of modernist poetry. But very little has been said about the wide-reaching and arguably more pervasive influence of the poetry anthology during the era. It was Pound's anthologies—particularly *Des Imagistes*—that were responsible for making the Imagist movement widely recognizable, especially in the sense of creating controversy and codifying the movement in ways little magazines and individual books of poetry never did. Due to their unique construction (combining the respectability, durability, and finality of a book with the timely interest of multiple poets and new poetry of little magazines) and numerous cultural usages (friends exchanging them as gifts, poets learning the craft or organizing movements, readers becoming familiar with new kinds of poetry, institutions preserving them on shelves), poetry anthologies have a wider and more culturally complex influence than either literary magazines or individual books of poetry.

Examining the uses of the terms “imagiste” and “anthology” in Pound's early publishing career illustrates the kind of influence anthologies had and shows that the Imagist movement and the medium of the anthology were closely linked from the very beginning. In 1909 Pound was influenced by T. E. Hulme and Ford Maddox Heuffer at the meetings of the Poets' Club in London. In the “Prefatory Note” to “The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme” from his 1912 *Ripostes*, Pound refers to the group as “The School of Images,” later referring to “Les Imagistes” as the poets of the future (58-59). And though these references to the beginnings of Imagism are accepted as the earliest references to the movement, it is not well known that the Poets' Club published four installments of *The Book of the Poets' Club*, which featured Hulme, Pound, and a

wide sampling of other poets.<sup>2</sup> Another example of Pound's familiarity with contemporary poetry anthologies arises during the time Pound was reading H.D. and Richard Aldington's poetry in manuscript form, was sending letters to Harriet Monroe, and was beginning to implement his plan to introduce Imagism. At this pivotal time in the history of Imagism, he was aware of at least three anthology projects going to press, two of which asked for his work to be included (one of these – *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* – he accepted).<sup>3</sup> Pound was also very familiar with a number of other influential anthologies of the era: the *Greek Anthology*, three famous anthologies by Leigh Hunt, Francis Turner Palgrave, and E.C. Stedman, and two editions of the *Book of the Rhymers' Club*.<sup>4</sup> During the formative years of the ideas of Imagism, anthologies were an established medium of poetic dissemination, and it is at least plausible that, after seeing the effect of these various anthologies, Pound decided to use the anthology form for the purposes of his own poetic movement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Cyrena N. Pondrom's "The Book of the Poets' Club and Pound's 'School of Images'" in *Journal of Modern Literature* 3.1 (1973):100-102.

<sup>3</sup> Pound was familiar with Elkin Mathews' *Vigo Verse Anthologies* in 1912 (collections that contained poets previously published under the Mathews imprint but didn't include Pound), Edward Marsh's first anthology called *Georgian Poetry: 1911-1912* (a collection in which Pound declined to appear and later denigrated), and finally Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, which first came out in 1912 (and included two works from Pound's 1911 *Canzoni*: "Portait" and "Ballad for Gloom").

<sup>4</sup> It is well known that Pound thought the *Greek Anthology* (which was first created in the first century BC) was required reading for any poet, preferably in the original language but if not then in J.W. Machail's 1890 translation *Selected Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, which went to print eight times (the last 1917) and appeared in three editions (the third published in 1911). Three other notable anthologies with which Pound was almost certainly familiar are Leigh Hunt's *Imagination and Fancy* (1844), Francis Turner Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861), and E.C. Stedman's *An American Anthology* (1900). Pound would have also been very interested in the content and format of *The Book of the Rhymers' Club* (1892) and *The Second Book of the Rhymers' Club* (1894), both published by Elkin Mathews and John Lane (before they parted ways). These nineteenth-century anthologies are discussed in my introduction and provide the necessary context for examining twentieth-century anthologies.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term medium to emphasize the traditional means of transmitting poetry through anthologies. When I begin to talk about how Pound recast the ways an anthology could be used, I rely on the term form.



The early occurrences of “imagist” and “anthology” in his work not only show how Pound was strongly affected by the anthology form, but also provide a compelling context for understanding the most provocative use of both these words. The first time the two terms converge in print is in a mysterious announcement in the January 1913 issue of *Poetry* (the magazine’s fourth number). The poems of “H.D., Imagiste” are introduced as “VERSES, TRANSLATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS FROM ‘THE ANTHOLOGY’” (118). The quotation marks around “THE ANTHOLOGY” communicate a sense of mystery and significance. In this issue, the two words are further intimately woven together, from the presentation of H.D. as “Imagiste” on the cover to Pound’s cryptic review “Status Rerum,” which begins directly after H.D.’s poems, alludes to Pound’s thoughts about anthology usage, and includes his first enigmatic elaboration of Imagism. Previous criticism has missed the obvious reference and collaboration of “imagist” and “anthology” in this issue, especially how these two terms work together to create something out of nothing. In fact, the convergence of terms signals a radical change (or beginning) in modernist book making. Because Pound referred to “the anthology” as if it already existed (a full year before *Des Imagistes* was published), he used this immaterial anthology to both confuse and convince readers of the importance of his nascent poetry movement. The word “anthology,” as it is first printed in the introduction to H.D.’s poems, thus generates a pivotal turn in modernist publishing history. And as prominent as “Imagist” has been in earlier studies, it is the word “anthology” that holds the key to understanding early modernist book publishing.

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This term is helpful because it evokes the concept of a mold or a matrix within which many different configurations are possible. Pound expands the affordances of the anthology form with *Des Imagistes*—his version of a New Verse anthology.

In order to trace the textual and cultural contexts of anthology publication during this time, the present chapter first examines the literary contexts Pound inevitably responded to as an anthology editor by analyzing reviews, advertisements, and reading practices. This is followed up by a description of his editorial tendencies as they are reflected in the publishing history of the first New Verse anthology, *Des Imagistes*. Relying on this context, I argue that Pound's use of the anthology was uniquely modernist, insofar as he both recast the anthology as a form of poetic transmission and made the process of reading an anthology as difficult as reading a modernist poem. As a result of these modernist innovations, his first two anthologies were the beginnings of what I call the New Verse anthology movement that began in early 1914. Moreover, where previous critics have either overlooked Pound's early anthologies (*Des Imagistes* and *Catholic Anthology*) or tried to include them in a larger discussion of his role as a kind of literary educator, I argue that Pound was not interested in making the new poetry accessible to contemporary readers; instead, he successfully created controversy and confusion in an attempt to publicize the movement—something that would not have been possible without the New Verse anthology form.

### **Previous Criticism**

Until the late 1990s, existing criticism about publication practices and literary modernism was very limited, and the idea that textual issues dramatically affected the reading of modernist works had only begun to be explored. And where much of the scholarship since the late '90s has focused on little magazines or single-authored books, my work shows how the poetry anthology needs to be examined from the same perspective because it uniquely lends itself to, at first, the codification of poetic movements and,

later, the creation of canons. The New Verse anthology was an integral part of modernist book making and consumption from the very beginning, and the lack of robust research about the formulation and use of anthologies from 1913 on shows the need for a careful examination of the creation and dissemination of poetry anthologies over the years.

One precursor to my research is George Bornstein's 2001 *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page*, which closely follows the work of D.F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann and is most closely associated with the methodologies I use in this study.<sup>6</sup> Bornstein's work is of dual importance to my project because he demonstrates the importance of textual studies to the task of recovering meaning in modernism and uses modernist poetry as his subject matter. He focuses on "historical contingency, multiple versions, and the material features of the text itself" (1). Instead of merely reading poetry and offering interpretation, he shows how interpretations are made and how they change depending upon the printed version itself. Bornstein often uses McGann's term "bibliographic code" while adding his own—the "contextual code," which shows how the meaning of a poem can change in relation to the order or grouping of poems surrounding it.<sup>7</sup> Though his approach encompasses all forms of print (from little magazines to anthologies), he helpfully comments on the way anthologies package poetry; for example, he mentions that cramming too many poems into an anthology can

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<sup>6</sup> D.F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of the Texts* (1986) and Jerome McGann's *The Textual Condition* (1997) are seminal works in the field of textual studies. McGann's chapter on the material trappings of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* is especially important to the study of material objects in modernist poetry.

<sup>7</sup> Though Bornstein does not directly draw upon it in *Material Modernism*, Neil Fraistat's *The Poem and the Book* (1985) is equally helpful for thinking about the "new juxtapositions of poems" across different editions because they allow for "rich and varied permutations" of meaning (4).

“obscure the poetic form” (63). Bornstein’s approach is especially productive in this study when I begin to examine the poems Pound included in *Des Imagistes* and the ways readers interacted with them.

While Bornstein offers a general methodology, John G. Nichols’s 2006 essay “Ezra Pound’s Anthologies and the Architecture of Reading” begins to do some of the work I am proposing and introduces Pound’s first four anthologies (*Des Imagistes*, 1914; *Catholic Anthology*, 1915; *Profile*, 1932; and *Active Anthology*, 1933). Nichols shares my belief about the importance of the poetry anthology: “literary compilations were the primary vehicle for circulating—and, in the process, defining—contemporary, modernist verse” (170). Though he spends two pages discussing *Des Imagistes*, his broader purpose – to show Pound as a kind of literary educator – doesn’t allow for the kind of close inspection I attempt in this chapter. My project is more concerned with the immediate ramifications of Pound’s collection: in particular, how it influenced poets like John Gould Fletcher and directly affected future poetry anthologies that were to be edited by Amy Lowell, Alfred Kreymborg, and Harriet Monroe in the following years.

The critical work that best focuses my study of the New Verse anthology is Lawrence Rainey’s 1998 *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*, which provides a strong foundation for discussing the reading culture of the second decade of the twentieth century. At the outset of his study, Rainey discusses the “ambiguous achievement” of modernism and comments on the commoditization of poetry and the way readers consumed modernist art objects. He writes:

Modernism, among other things, is a strategy whereby the work of art invites and solicits its commodification, but does so in such a way that it becomes a commodity of a special sort, one that is temporarily exempted

from the exigencies of immediate consumption prevalent with the larger cultural economy, and instead is integrated into a different economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation, and investment – activities that precisely in this period begin to encroach upon and merge into one another in unexpected ways. (3)

The new poetry that Pound and others were trying to disseminate was itself a “commodity of a special sort,” and the audience that consumed it was generally well-off, educated, and interested in art, as can be confirmed by *Poetry*’s list of donors.<sup>8</sup> From 1900 to 1910, poetry most often reached this audience in national magazines and newspapers rather than in books or literary journals. In the US, this began to change with the first issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in October 1912, but it also began to change in different ways when Pound began to use the poetry anthology for his purposes in 1913-14. This change in publication venues for poetry meant that the anthology fit uniquely and comfortably into the already existing cultural contexts of consumers. The patrons, collectors, speculators, and investors who had been consuming poetry for decades were already familiar with the medium of the poetry anthology. And due to their construction as books, the anthologies these people were accustomed to using were much more stable and long-lasting than the flimsy and transient little magazines of the day.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Harriet Monroe published a list of over one hundred donors (“lovers of art”) who had agreed to support *Poetry* before it began publication. See *Poetry* 1.1 (1912): 29.

<sup>9</sup> This statement seems intuitively reasonable, but some might argue that many little magazines survive in spite of their flimsy construction. Many little magazines do survive and many of them can even be found online; however, little magazines are more likely than anthologies to survive with gaps (advertisements were sometimes removed by librarians for binding). I am arguing here that anthologies last longer and are more accessible to today’s readers than little magazines because of the way they are used and because of their actual hardness as objects. Since anthologies have hard covers and are not printed on a monthly basis, they usually find their way to shelves where they are more likely to be preserved. Little magazines, on the other hand, come out more often and usually have soft covers, making them more likely to be set on a table or dropped into a waste bin.

In short, the poetry anthology had the potential to be the most easily commodifiable literary object on the market. The poetry anthology had the potential to fit into the space occupied by highbrow, avant-garde readers *and* to fit into the larger context of poetry exchange and collecting that already existed, a context where readers usually viewed anthologies as general introductions or collectibles in their own right. Consumers were generally more likely to own a significant anthology than copies of an avant-garde literary magazine. The first New Verse anthologies were therefore better primed for success on the popular literary market and were sure to have a different kind of influence than a little magazine such as *Poetry* did. The New Verse anthology could be used to hold a new poetic movement together, and this movement could be offered as a whole to the public in the form of a collectible and most importantly as a token of what Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural capital.” Though Pound would not have known exactly how his anthologies would fare in the market, he did know that they had the potential to be successful in different cultural and economic contexts. As we will see, the four different printings of *Des Imagistes* show its varied potential and wide success.

### **Early Twentieth Century Poetry Anthologies**

In the introduction to *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* (2000), Leah Price theorizes the use and reception of anthologies from the nineteenth century up to the contemporary era. She writes: “Anthologies are more than a referendum. They determine not simply who gets published or what gets read, but who reads, and how” (3).

Understanding the intricate social flux between the publication process (from author to editor to publisher) and the act of reading (obtaining the book, reading it, and for what reasons) is imperative for trying to recreate the contexts of anthology reading in the

second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The production, publication, and dissemination of anthologies – coupled with an exploration into the consumers who bought, traded, shared, collected, and (sometimes) read these collections – therefore provides essential context for understanding the achievement of Pound's New Verse anthology, *Des Imagistes*.

In his essay "What is the History of Books?" Robert Darnton details the circular, social process of book-creation, from authorial conception, to readerly practice, and back again. Printed books, he argues, "generally pass through roughly the same life cycle. It could be described as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader" (67). In this way, the lifecycle of a book would seem to start with the author and end with the reader, but Darnton goes on to say, "the reader completes the circuit, because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition" (67). The author has the reader in mind when he or she writes (a kind of indirect influence), but the reader has a more powerful connection to the author after publication—a direct influence in the form of sales, reviews, and even personal letters and conversations. If the book goes to print again, the readerly responses and the resulting changes made in later editions are forever present in subsequent printings.

In the case of poetry anthologies, the communications circuit becomes more complex. The original poet is the primary author and writes a poem that is then (usually) published in a newspaper, magazine, or individual book of poetry. From there, the poem is read (in one or more of the forms already mentioned or possibly in manuscript) by the editor of a proposed anthology; this reading is itself further complicated by the many

other possible poems from which an anthologist must choose to include in the final book. Having chosen only the “best” from all possible poems, the editor becomes a second kind of creator, because the poem is resituated by its placement amongst the other poems in the collection, thereby producing new meanings that are sometimes drastically different than those the poet had in mind. The poetry anthologist therefore holds a specific and influential kind of power: the power to communicate an inherent evaluation of the poem (by its inclusion in the collection), to compare the poem implicitly to the other poems and poets that surround it, and to place a group of poems into the larger context of a group or movement. Because of the (generally) shorter length of the selections, poetry anthologies make juxtapositions between works more numerous and more obvious and also lend themselves to the creation and codification of literary movements. Prose anthologies, on the other hand, often value breadth or general representation of excerpted material.<sup>10</sup> The reader’s goal in reading an anthology of excerpted novels—to get the overall gist of a novel—is different for a poetry anthology, which allows full poems to be read and the sense of a movement to be communicated.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, anthologies utilized the available possibilities for anthology creation, and the form and content of the poetry in these anthologies follow many of the trends set by their nineteenth-century predecessors. Both

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<sup>10</sup> Three popular prose anthologies illustrate this. *The Universal Anthology* (Richard Garnett, et al., 1899) collected the “best literature ancient, medieval and modern” and included excerpts from writers as disparate as Benjamin Franklin, Immanuel Kant, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Carlyle. The two-volume set called *The Anthology of English Prose* and *The Anthology of Modern English Prose* (Annie Barnett and Lucy Dale, 1912) attempt to be just as comprehensive. One exception to the comprehensive literary anthology is an anthology of political essays. *The Free Press Anthology* (Theodore Schroeder, 1909) gathered essays and quotations to argue for the political movement of free speech. Even so, poetry was very common in anthologies, and Leah Price reminds us that “over the course of the nineteenth century editors narrowed their generic range until the anthology-piece became tacitly synonymous with the lyric” (5).



the poets and the poetry anthologies of this decade imitated the kind of poetry that fit into the established traditions of the nineteenth century. Editors of magazines and anthologies would not have embraced poets who tried to work outside the established parameters. Because of this bias in the literary establishment, a change in the way poetry was published was just as necessary as a change in the poetry itself. Poetry and anthologies from this decade do not embrace innovation; instead, in order to be published, poets and editors rely on what was successful in the past.

F. Brett Cox's 1994 article "'What Need, Then, for Poetry?': The Genteel Tradition and the Continuity of American Literature" shows how the "aesthetic idealism and cultural conservatism that came to be known as the 'genteel tradition'" persisted in anthologies after the turn of the century (212). For poets and critics of the time, art should aspire to the ideals of beauty and truth. Even in 1911, the anthologist E. C. Stedman wrote, "If genius has its fountain in the soul, its impulse must be towards Ideality. It seeks that ideal which is the truest truth, the absolute realism" (qtd. in Cox 215). The poets Stedman preferred to anthologize – Longfellow and Emerson, for instance – produced the kind of poetry Cox calls "pure and noble topics rhapsodized in pure and noble language" (216). The aestheticism present in the content of the poetry is even reinforced in the design and construction of the anthologies, especially in their use of floral designs and grandiose portraits of poets. Even ten and twenty years into the twentieth century, many editors still used the popular anthologies of the nineteenth century as models.

Of the editors interested in poetry, there were two prominent American anthologists working within the genteel mindset during the first decade of the twentieth

century. One of them was Jessie Belle Rittenhouse, whose collections, as Cox writes, show “genteel aesthetics at work” (221). Rittenhouse published *The Younger American Poets* in 1904 and *The Little Book of Modern Verse* in 1912 (followed up by *The Second Book of Modern Verse* in 1919 and *The Third Book of Modern Verse* in 1929). An excerpt from the preface to her 1912 collection shows that Rittenhouse uses the term “modern” to focus her collection on those poets who “have done their work within the past decade and [whose work] represents the twentieth century spirit” (v). This “spirit” is idealistic and passionate, as demonstrated by the first poem in *The Little Book of Modern Verse*, by Bliss Carman. Carman’s poem, “Lord of My Heart’s Elation,” begins with an exclamation of the ideal:

Lord of my heart’s elation  
 Spirit of things unseen  
 Be thou my aspiration  
 Consuming and serene! (1-4)

Another editor who valued this kind of elevated poetry was William Stanley Braithwaite. His 1906 *Book of Elizabethan Verse*, 1909 *Book of Georgian Verse*, and 1910 *Book of Restoration Verse* – though published out of chronological order – were meant to be the first, third, and second volumes in a series of four anthologies that documented all of English poetry from the time of Tottel’s *Miscellany* in 1557 to the Victorian era.<sup>11</sup> (The proposed fourth *Book of Victorian Verse* was never published.) Braithwaite, who was employed as a literary critic at the *Boston Evening Transcript*, made a career out of

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<sup>11</sup> Braithwaite’s 1909 *Book of Georgian Verse* (printed in London and Boston) collects significantly different poetry than Edward Marsh’s 1912 *Georgian Poetry* (printed in London and New York). They are similarly titled but conceptually distinct anthologies. Braithwaite’s anthology presents one hundred fifty years of English poetry (roughly coinciding with the reigns of the King Georges I-IV, from 1714 to 1837), whereas Marsh’s anthology covers “another Georgian period” (during the current reign of King George V, which began in 1910).

collecting poetry for his yearly editions of *Anthology of Magazine Verse*, a volume that was first published in 1913. His anthologies prized poetry in the genteel tradition, and though he was an advocate for some modernist poets, his later selections show that he did not value the work of poets like Ezra Pound.

The works of Rittenhouse and Braithwaite exemplify the kinds of anthologies available from 1900 to 1913, and evidence of other “genteel” anthologies is prominent in the advertisements collected at the ends of the first six issues of *Poetry*. Since Pound announced his “Anthology” in the January 1913 issue, the other anthologies that were important to readers of the magazine during this time reveal what he was up against. The first volume (six issues from October 1912 to March 1913) of *Poetry* contains no less than fifty references to anthologies, collections, and compilations. These issues demonstrate that book publishers believed consumers were collectors and that books were a commodity that could be marketed for their material beauty rather than their literary content. Moreover, the advertisements from these early issues of *Poetry* show a preexisting market for poetry anthologies in the colleges and universities. These two cultural realities – anthologies used as collectibles and as academic resources – illustrate a contemporary convergence of anthology use that shows the way the public was primed for the reception of the first New Verse anthology. Because these ads were so prevalent, readers would be more likely to notice a dubious reference to an “ANTHOLOGY,” especially if they had purchased one of the collections that had been advertised in past months.

The most common anthology advertisement in *Poetry* is for literary collectibles, and these ads show the kinds of books that readers valued. Many of the anthologies were

bound in paper boards with vellum backs, making them especially attractive on the outside. The ads show that the cover was very important to consumers, as the words “ornamental” and “decorative” are used frequently. Moreover, the repeated use of the words “limited” and “only” communicates a sense of scarcity, foregrounding the collectible status of these editions. Given the beauty of the books, it is obvious that sellers sought to reach consumers who wanted to add a touch of sophistication to their libraries or who wanted to give a tasteful gift to a friend or family member. Common adjectives from the advertisements – “gilded,” “hand-made,” and “handsome” – emphasize their collectible nature. Many of these books, much like E.C. Stedman’s *American Anthology* (1900), boast frontispiece portraits, photogravure, and decorative covers. Other ads highlight the available kinds of paper: India paper, Florentine paper, and Japan vellum. Whatever the approach, most advertisements from the early issues of *Poetry* show that the market was flooded with beautiful and expensive collectible anthologies. Pound was very familiar with these kinds of books and the way they were made, as can be seen from his ornamental first publication, *A Lume Spento* (1908), which was custom published in Italy. Pound was also intimately involved in the publication process of his early books of poetry with publisher Elkin Mathews.<sup>12</sup>

The first and only advertisement in the debut issue of *Poetry* comes from the magazine’s Chicago printer, the Ralph Fletcher Seymour Company. This ad peddles rare books, and in a later ad, the publisher outlines its mission: “PRIVATELY PRINTED, LIMITED EDITIONS OF BOOKS, manufactured and put on sale for authors or publishers constitute our particular work. We print this magazine” (Feb. 1913). In another

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<sup>12</sup> See James G. Nelson’s well-researched *Elkin Mathews: A Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, and Pound* (1989).

ad, they say, “This firm is prepared to design and print privately issued and LIMITED EDITIONS OF BOOKS of verse or prose; also MEMORIAL BOOKS, CARDS OF GREETING and BOOK PLATES” (Nov. 1913). The literary ephemera included in this list show that there was a culture of book collecting and book ownership. Bookplates are an especially good example of this culture: readers found it necessary to paste their names into books by purchasing custom-printed bookplates. Books, and especially anthologies, offer a kind of power to readers – the power to hold literature in a portable container with one’s name on it. The power of possession allows the literature to travel, to be shown to others, and to serve as evidence of learning and sophistication. There was a market looking for the next literary commodity, and consumers were inundated with advertisements for anthologies and rare books. Pound was ready to exploit this market.

The other publisher that captures the cultural mode of anthology reading, especially as portable collectables, is Henry Holt and Co. They printed and advertised two kinds of anthologies in the November 1912 issue of *Poetry*. The first, their “Delightful Pocket Anthologies,” are described as “uniform, with full gilt flexible covers and pictured cover linings.” One of the titles was *Poems for Travelers* (1908), a volume that prepares travelers for their visits to foreign nations by offering English poems about those nations: “Covers France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and Greece.” *The Open Road* (1901) was in its twentieth edition in 1913 and is billed as “a little book for wayfarers.” Pocket anthologies for travelers were popular at the time and were designed to fit into a jacket or vest pocket and to be used for quick reading on the go.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> These pocket anthologies were often no larger than 16 or 17 centimeters. Examples can be found at Northwestern University: *The Garland of Childhood* (821.08 W824), *The Open Road* (Special Collections: 20<sup>th</sup> Cent Eng F699f), and *The Poetic Old-World* (808.1 H926p).

popularity of these collections could mean at least two things: first, that there was a leisure class who traveled and desired to read poetry while moving from place to place, and second, that there was at least a group of people who dreamed of such a life and enjoyed it vicariously through poetry.

Knowing how profitable anthologies could be, Holt also promoted a different kind of collection in the same ad: the 1912 *Home Book of Verse*. This collection, compiled by Burton E. Stevenson, is described in eight short paragraphs that declaim its authority and usefulness. The following text is the most prominent on the page:

Collects in one volume the best short poetry of the English language—the masterpieces and "favorites," the poetry that everybody says is good and the verses everybody reads—from the time of Spenser, with especial attention to American verse. The most comprehensive and representative collection of American and English poetry ever published, including 3,120 unabridged poems from some 1,100 authors. [...] No other collection includes so many popular favorites and fugitive verses.

*The Home Book of Verse* sells itself as a “comprehensive” source text that is meant to be an end-all collection that would allow readers to have at their fingertips all the poetry they will ever need. Though the contents would not necessarily be innovative, the construction of the book itself is described as novel and practical. The ad even touches on the possible ways the book can be used: “The use of India paper makes possible a single column to a page instead of the two-column arrangement of the older anthologies, and gives a compact, handy volume for reading or the shelf instead of an unwieldy book merely for the table.” The India paper chosen by the publisher allows for greater accessibility than the “older anthologies” – especially because the paper is thin and allows as many as four thousand pages in a single volume.

Because this Henry Holt and Co. advertisement showcases anthologies of different sizes and purposes—the pocket and the comprehensive anthologies—it demonstrates the wide use of anthologies as collectibles for the book-buying market. Readers might be willing to purchase *The Home Book of Verse* and a number of “delightful pocket anthologies”—books that would necessarily hold some of the same poems. The form of the poetry anthology can appeal to poetry readers in a variety of ways, so much so that they might want to own multiple editions. In what other form could a publisher convince someone to buy two copies of the same poems in two different books? This shows the importance and desirability of the anthology as a cohesive object over and against the singularity of the individual poems. It is also evident that “avant-garde” anthologies were not present in any of the advertisements in *Poetry*, and the New Verse anthology could easily fill this gap in anthology publication.

Publishers that used advertising space in *Poetry* to sell books as gifts and collectibles are more common than publishers who tried to sell books for the academic market. Even so, the University of Chicago Press and Houghton Mifflin Co. both offered anthologies for use in the university. The February 1913 issue of *Poetry* includes two ads from each of these publishers, which are (perhaps) coincidentally printed one right after the other. The University of Chicago Press ad reads, “NOTABLE COLLECTIONS of AMERICAN and ENGLISH POEMS,” and the Houghton Mifflin ad offers, “The *Cambridge Edition*, The Best Single Volume Form in Which to Possess the Works of Famous British and American Poets.” These collections emphasize their academic stature in similar ways. They claim the prestige and authority required for success in the university by listing the names of the colleges where its editors are professors: Brown

University, University of California, University of Wisconsin, Harvard University, Clark University, University of Chicago, and Columbia University. The books are also “carefully chosen and well-balanced,” “adopted by all leading American colleges,” and “used in class work at Harvard.” The books emphasize their functionality and usefulness to students as well: “The value of the work is greatly increased by the comprehensive notes, bibliography, and indices”; the “equipment of notes ... shall serve the needs of readers and students”; and even, “so stitched as to open easily and ‘stay open.’” Lastly, academic depth can be found in the declared “accuracy” of the texts and the fact that “a majority of the selections are complete poems.”

All these ads in the pages of *Poetry* show that there was a poetry-buying public ready to purchase anthologies. The reading public of the time was better prepared to receive poetry anthologies than to read little magazines, and this cultural reality paved the way for the first New Verse anthology. Houghton Mifflin draws upon a kind of nationalism and emphasizes a shared American heritage: the *Cambridge Edition* ad includes the “poetic works of Americans, covering the entire period of our history.” The inclusive tone suggests an educated audience of like-minded individuals that would be interested in the work of American poets. Pound understood this literary situation in America as well as anyone, and he knew how he wanted to approach this audience. In an October 22, 1912 letter to Harriet Monroe, Pound wrote “My own belief is that the public is sick of lukewarm praise of the mediocre” (12). When *Des Imagistes* was published a year and a half later, the product was neither lukewarm nor mediocre.



### **Mystery and Immateriality in *Des Imagistes***

In January 1913, readers of *Poetry* would have noticed five advertisements included at the end of their monthly issue. Five publishers were selling their most recent books of poetry and prose,<sup>14</sup> but in spite of their notable quotations, bold-type font, and ornamental headings, none of these five is the most dynamic advertiser in this issue of *Poetry*. In fact, the most ambitious advertiser is not a publisher but the poet and critic Ezra Pound. The methods he uses to publicize Imagism are mysterious, and the way he introduces his collection emphasizes the book as a perplexing immaterial object before it entered the material world in published form.<sup>15</sup> To create this mysterious and immaterial object, Pound continually adds dubious textual clues that force readers to look for answers that are almost never given. Textual codes in the magazine reveal a narrative about Imagism and the first New Verse anthology – Pound’s *Des Imagistes* – that has not yet been brought to light.

To begin, it is best to move back in time to the October 1912 publication of Pound’s *Ripostes* in London. It is here that we first encounter the word “Imagiste,” and it is here that Pound initiates the mysteriousness that would come to characterize the

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<sup>14</sup> These ads were from the following established publishing houses: Charles Scribner & Sons, New York; John W. Luce & Co., Boston; Houghton Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York; the George H. Doran Co., New York; and Mitchell Kennerly, New York.

<sup>15</sup> I use the term “immaterial” for the useful distinction it creates between what literary objects were mentioned in *Poetry* and what objects actually existed at the time. In one very real sense, Pound’s strategy can be seen as a normal part of promoting and publishing a book—a strategy that most authors and publishers utilize. In another sense, however, Pound convinces his readers that the book already exists in order to make them feel like they are missing something. While everyday publishers point to a product that “will come out in the fall” or that “will be perfect for holiday gift-giving,” Pound makes his readers believe the product already exists and realize that they cannot access it. The term “immaterial,” then, highlights the contrast between the idea of books that exist in the normal publication cycle and Pound’s use of a fake book to misdirect his readers. I also use the term to show the connection between the immaterial concept (created in a reader’s mind) and the material realization of the concept, however different it may be, in print.

movement. The title page presents the “Ripostes of Ezra Pound” with the subtitle: “Where to are Appended the Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme with Prefatory Note.” Pound’s note is emphasized right from the first page, and the “Contents” list also foregrounds this appendix. In the prefatory note, Pound introduces the “complete” poems of Hulme, comprising only five short pieces. The note continues in a jocular tone by pointing to the 1909 meetings of the Poets’ Club, calling it the “‘School of Images,’ which may or may not have existed” (59). Pound then places Imagism (without yet using the term) within a range of artistic movements, including “Les Unamistes,” “the Impressionists,” “the Post-Impressionists,” and “a certain French school which attempted to dispense with verbs altogether.” Having set up a context of artistic movements, Pound then points out his own: “As for the future, *Les Imagistes*, the descendants of the forgotten school of 1909, have that in their keeping” (59). This is Pound’s earliest designation of the movement as “Les Imagistes.” He had an idea of what a poetic movement should look like, and he spent time thinking about how he would start his own. Pound may have thought of using *Poetry* as the organ of his movement, but it becomes evident very early that the anthology would have to be his chosen medium, because *Poetry* would not be the mouthpiece of any one movement.<sup>16</sup>

The story of Imagism doesn’t appear in the inaugural issue of *Poetry*, but clues begin to appear in the November 1912 issue, which includes three poems by Richard Aldington: “XOPIKOS,” “To a Greek Marble,” and “A Vieux Jardin.” (Not

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<sup>16</sup> Monroe’s “Open Door” policy makes this implicit as early as the November 1912 issue: “The Open Door will be the policy of this magazine – may the great poet we are looking for never find it shut, or half-shut, against his ample genius! To this end the editors hope to keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school” (64).

coincidentally, these three poems would be the first three printed in *Des Imagistes*.)

The titles of Aldington's poems, not to mention the content, push readers out of an expected or comfortable reading experience, and these readers would very likely find themselves looking for more information at the back of the issue, leading them to the biographical notes:

Mr. Richard Aldington is a young English poet, one of the "Imagistes," a group of ardent Hellenists who are pursuing interesting experiments in *vers libre*; trying to attain in English certain subtleties of cadence of the kind which Mallarmé and his followers have studied in French. Mr. Aldington has published little as yet, and nothing in America. (65)

Readers wanting to find answers about the origins of the three poems printed in the issue are offered the term "Imagistes," something that is even more puzzling than the titles of Aldington's poems. The French term *vers libre* would further mystify readers and locate the movement overseas. This is the earliest instance of the term "Imagiste" in *Poetry*, and from the very beginning, the movement is promoted by the use of mystery and the illusion of immateriality (a "group of ardent Hellenists" hardly existed). What is this new poetic movement? How does Hellenism function in the poetry? How does French poetry influence it?

The December 1912 issue of *Poetry* offers no obvious answers, but Pound does continue his preoccupation with the Greek and *vers libre* in his review of poetry by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. Pound says that Tagore's poetry has "the sound-unit principle of the most advanced artists in *vers libre*" and that "the sound of it when spoken is rather like good Greek." In this way, Pound connects the work of the Indian poet with the ideas of Imagism mentioned in Richard Aldington's bio a month earlier. By now, Pound himself has moved on from the troubadour-inspired poetry of his first published

books and is focusing all his poetic and critical energy on the ideas of his new Imagist movement. He believes the values that he prizes in his own movement are present in the work of Tagore, but his inner musings about the characteristics of Imagism have not yet been presented to the public. He is waiting for the best moment and for the best example of Imagist poetry before proclaiming his new movement to the world.

The poetry Pound was looking for appeared from the hand of one person, the young and unpublished Hilda Doolittle. In her autobiography, *End of Torment*, H.D. recalls she was living in London in 1912 when Pound first read her “Hermes of the Ways” and gave her the pen name “H.D.”<sup>17</sup> After reading the poem and making what he thought were the necessary excisions, Pound scrawled “H.D., Imagiste” at the end of it, and this was the way she ended up being introduced to the public. The “Contents” list from the cover of the January 1913 issue of *Poetry* lists three poems by this “H.D., Imagiste” and marks the public beginning of the movement. Richard Aldington had been mentioned two months earlier as an Imagiste, but there were few other contextual clues to what the movement was. The January 1913 number provides this context in the form of a dubious section title, H.D.’s three poems, and a poetry review called “Status Rerum” by Pound. But as was already typical of Pound’s references to the movement, the January 1913 issue—with all its force and reputation—answers few questions; instead, the issue presents an immaterial anthology and introduces the movement in a shroud of mystery.

The first published evidence of Pound’s desire to create an anthology to promote Imagism appears in this January 1913 issue, and a close reading shows that readers were

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<sup>17</sup> George Bornstein’s “Pound and the Making of Modernism” (pp. 22-42) in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound* (1999) describes H.D.’s story in more detail, drawing upon *End to Torment* (18).



The December issue did adopt a light blue color rather than the red that was normally used to supplement the black ink; additionally, changes in text size, updates about the progress of the magazine being entered as “second-class matter at Postoffice Chicago,” and even a typo illustrate that the construction and organization of the cover was still in flux in January. The larger text size for the contents list in the January issue reverts to the text used in the October and November issues and suggests a desire to present fewer ideas on the cover, a decision that emphasizes the words and characters that are printed.<sup>18</sup> This is important because the larger text size draws the eyes to non-alphabetic characters like punctuation and would likely bring the reader’s attention to the very conspicuous quotation marks that surround the description of H.D., “Imagiste.” Typical readers might well scan the cover, starting towards the top with the title of the magazine, then running their eyes down the list of poets, probably focusing on last names. This would bring their eyes to rest on the word “Imagiste” and subsequently on the initials, H.D. Both names are a mystery. Is the poet male or female? Is the poet French? What do the initials stand for? Is the editor or poet trying to hide something? All these questions compel the reader to look further into the issue for answers. If it is possible to create mystery and intrigue in a contents list, then Harriet Monroe (and Ezra Pound) certainly did so in this case. The new cover design probably was not changed to create this mystery and help announce Imagism, but the aesthetic decision to go back to the original design effectively

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<sup>18</sup> The December issue printed the names of the poets and their poems. William Butler Yeats was the primary poet of the issue, and instead of attributing “Five Poems” to him, as the January issue would, all his poems were listed. This practice cluttered the December cover with words in a smaller text size and so deemphasized the poets and the poems listed.

emphasized poet names and made H.D. more prominent than she would have been if her poems had been printed in December.

The changing organization of the first four covers of *Poetry* also foregrounds what would be an even more important issue for Monroe: ordering the contents list. Though there will always be exceptions to the rule, Monroe's editorial policy for ordering poems places the most important poems on the first and last lines of the list. The December 1912 issue is a case in point. The first line mentions "Five Poems" by William Butler Yeats, and the last includes "Poems" by Rabindranath Tagore, whom Pound reviews, who was then popular in Europe, and who ended up winning the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. These poets were the "draws" for that issue of *Poetry*, while the other poets (John Reed, George Sterling, and Clark Ashton Smith) were squeezed in between these two giants. The middle of the contents list is the space for unknown poets or poets who were directly associated with the magazine itself (for example, Ezra Pound's first two poems in October 1912, Harriet Monroe's first poem in November 1912, and assistant editor Alice Corbin's four poems in December 1912). In probably the best example of this contents list phenomenon, T.S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was listed last in the June 1915 issue. Monroe's editorial principles, as they relate to the list, thus confirm a reading of the January 1913 issue that gives special priority to H.D., "Imagiste."

Flipping through the pages of this issue of the magazine also shows the prominence of H.D.'s poems and leads to the first mention of Pound's immaterial anthology. Starting at page one, the most conspicuous textual marks are Vachel Linday's directions for reading his poem "General William Booth Enters into Heaven." Printed

marginal notes like “Bass drum, slower and softer” and “Grand chorus – tambourines – all instruments in full blast” were novel and conspicuous. Even the most casual reader would notice these musical directions. After this poem, there are no similarly conspicuous marks until the capitalized introduction to HD’s poems: “VERSES, TRANSLATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS FROM ‘THE ANTHOLOGY’” (See Figure 2). If the contents list created mystery for readers, then this title must have sent their heads spinning.

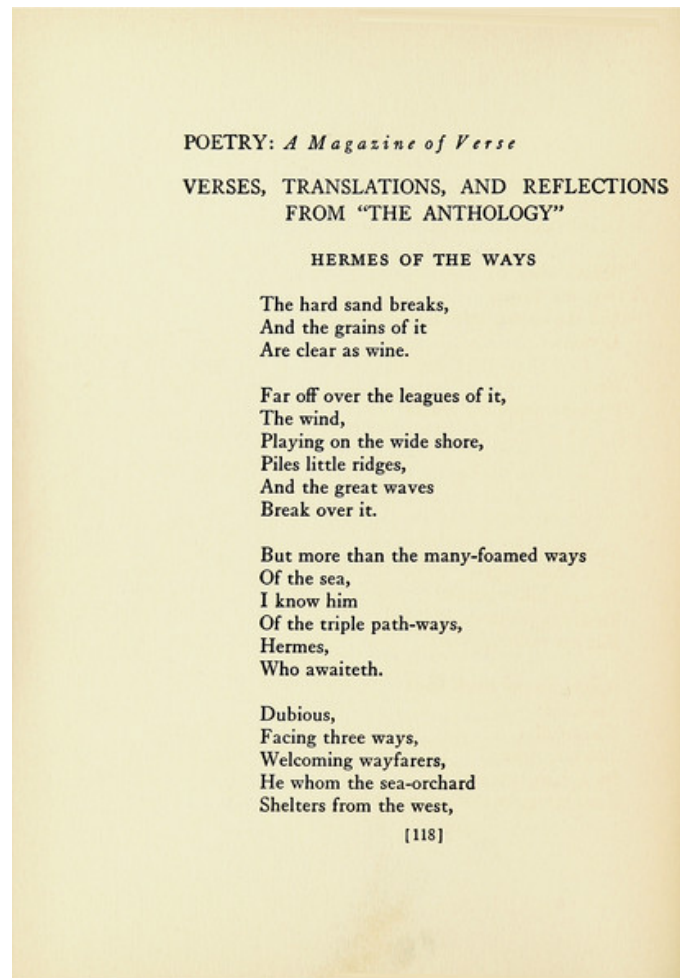


Figure 2. Verses, Translations, and Reflections from “The Anthology.” *Poetry* Vol. 1, Issue 4 (Jan. 1913): 118, Modernist Journals Project.



The reader would have believed that at least some of what was to come would be translated from a foreign language and that the poems came from some anthology already published, probably overseas. In fact, this anthology was immaterial at this point, existing only in the mind of Pound and now in the minds of the readers of *Poetry*. It would not exist for another year, and these textual clues create a strong sense of mystery that figures prominently in the presentation of H.D.'s poems.

All the questions that readers would have been asking about Imagism from the moment they picked up the magazine would be unanswered. Still trying to make some sense of these questions, readers would turn the page from H.D.'s poems to Pound's "Status Rerum" ("The State of Things"). But instead of offering some kind of explanation, which would be expected in the prose section of the magazine called "Editorial Comment," Pound extends the mystery that started on the cover. He begins by saying "I find Mr. Yeats the only poet worthy of serious study." He then admits there is some good work being done in England but qualifies this statement: "As to [Yeats's] English contemporaries, they are food, sometimes very good food, for anthologies. There are a number of men who have written a poem, or several poems, worth knowing and remembering, but they do not much concern the young artist studying the art of poetry." Pound was likely referring to the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, the first of which he knew was coming out in December. This comment on anthologies offers no help to the reader trying to understand what anthology H.D.'s poems had come from. Instead, Pound suggests that poetry of a certain kind is good enough for anthologies; and here, he is referring to anthologies of a certain kind as well – anthologies that would be fixed firmly in the lineage of nineteenth-century anthologies. The poems in anthologies like

*Imagination and Fancy, The Golden Treasury, American Anthology, and the Rhymers'*

Club anthologies were “worth knowing and remembering,” but they were not doing anything new and shouldn’t concern “the young artist studying the art of poetry.”

After this short mention of anthologies in “Status Rerum,” Pound shifts his focus to Paris, which a sharp reader might connect with the word “Imagiste.” He writes, “The important work of the last twenty-five years has been done in Paris,” raising the question of what that important work is. After an instructive comment about the influence of Ford Maddox Hueffer on himself (“I would rather talk about poetry with Ford Maddox Hueffer than with any man in London”), Pound finally gives his readers what they are looking for: “The youngest school here that has the nerve to call itself a school is that of the Imagistes.” But he says little about what this “school” advocates, other than an idea about “precision” and an “opposition to the numerous and unassembled writers who busy themselves with dull and interminable effusions.” Pound also leaves most adherents of this school unnamed (they are “two or three young men”); Richard Aldington is an exception whose work seems to show “a gleam of hope.” H.D. is not even mentioned, and the mystery continues.

Readers would have to wait two months until the March 1913 issue for any new information about Imagism. The following editor’s note shows how intrigued readers had been by the January 1913 issue:

Editor's Note—In response to many requests for information regarding Imagism and the Imagistes, we publish this note by Mr. Flint, supplementing it with further exemplification by Mr. Pound. It will be seen from these that Imagism is not necessarily associated with Hellenic subjects, or with vers libre as a prescribed form. (198)

These statements further complicate the idea of Imagism, especially because Hellenism and *vers libre* were firmly associated with Imagism from its first mention in Richard Aldington's biographical note in the November 1912 issue of *Poetry*. This contradiction would frustrate careful readers who thought they had gleaned some idea about Imagism from the pages of *Poetry*. Neither F.S. Flint (who was to be published in *Des Imagistes*) nor Pound mention "THE ANTHOLOGY." Their cryptic pieces discuss the features of the poetry instead and leave out the names of poets. Pound's "Don'ts" essay is probably the most famous early essay on Imagism, but it contains no list of adherents. Readers would have to wait over a year to learn who these Imagists really were. The immaterial "ANTHOLOGY" that was first introduced with H.D.'s poems in *Poetry* became a collection Pound put together throughout 1913 and that was finally materially published in February of 1914. It becomes evident that Pound wasn't interested in the accuracy of his references or even in authentic attribution (the Flint piece was written almost completely by Pound himself). Instead, he wanted to get Imagism to the public and to affect the state of poetry writing in general, even if it took confusion and controversy (via mystery and immateriality) to make these things happen.

### **Mystery and Materiality in *Des Imagistes***

*Des Imagistes* left an intriguing material path for researchers to follow, and Darnton's communication circuit can be seen on many levels. The material journey H.D.'s poems took, for example, from the original poet's handwritten manuscript, to an edited manuscript with Pound's excisions, to a letter to Harriet Monroe, to the pages of *Poetry* in January 1913, to a collection Pound put together on paper and mailed to Alfred Kreymborg, to the *Glebe* in February 1914, to New York and London book editions in

March 1914, to another New York edition in 1917, and finally—even—to an online, hyper-text version of the anthology in 2009 shows how revolutionary and influential this New Verse anthology really was.<sup>19</sup> It was not re-released in new editions (though Pound had plans for corrections),<sup>20</sup> but it codified the movement of Imagism in its various reprintings. It recast the anthology form and made it a viable and desirable medium for the dissemination of the New Poetry. Pound knew very early on that it would take an anthology to make his movement stable, accessible, and independent. But this codification and strength could not have occurred if the anthology was not published in a way that electrified readers. Pound knew that his anthology would have to be mysterious, and he worked hard, in both publishing and internally organizing the collection, to create this mystery at the material level.

During the spring and summer of 1913 Pound was looking for a venue for the material commencement of his movement, and he found one that was new and even mysterious. Pound met John Cournos in London, and Cournos told him about a little magazine that Alfred Kreymborg was starting in the U.S. called the *Glebe*. Pound seized the opportunity and sent over his collection of Imagist poems to be published in the magazine. The note attached to the poems read, “Unless you’re another American ass, you’ll set this up just as it stands!” This comment to Kreymborg illustrates that Pound had already “set” the anthology as he wanted it and that he suspected Kreymborg would

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<sup>19</sup> Nick Montfort’s 2008 MIT Comparative Media Studies class created their own online edition of *Des Imagistes* at <http://desimagistes.com>. (The site is no longer accessible online but can be accessed via the Internet Archive’s WayBack Machine.)

<sup>20</sup> Yale’s Pound Papers (Box 43, folder 3663) include notes on revisions that would have been present if the anthology were printed again in a new edition. In his “After Ch’u Yuan” (43), Pound wanted “wisteria” to be “wistaria,” the hyphen to be omitted from “silver-blue,” and a line break added after “flood.” In the next poem, “Liu Ch’e” (44), he wanted “courtyard” and “footfall” to be hyphenated.

see the merits of the movement. But even for Pound this comment seems forceful, and it shows he had a strong desire to see the poems published in the exact order he had chosen for them.<sup>21</sup> The tone of the note, not to mention that this was the only place he sent the manuscript, suggests that Pound believed publishing *Des Imagistes* in the *Glebe* would be most beneficial for the movement. The fact that the *Glebe* was to print books in their entirety—a rarity amongst periodicals—would have caught Pound’s attention. The newness of Imagism must have seemed a good fit with the excitement that comes with the publication of a new journal. This newness was also supplemented by the obscure beginnings of the *Glebe*. The magazine was conceived in a “shack” in Ridgefield, New Jersey, and, according to Suzanne Churchill, Kreymborg’s recollections are a “self-mythologizing discourse of the little magazine’s origins” (32). The Ridgefield shack was geographically far from the center of poetic innovation in London, and the stories of the beginning of the journal are fundamentally mysterious.

The mysterious origin of the *Glebe* perhaps contributed to conflicting accounts of the magazine’s history, though Jay Bochner seems to have resolved most of the conflicts in his entry for the *Glebe* in *American Little Magazines* (1992). Most of the confusion surrounds the ordering of the issues and publication dates,<sup>22</sup> but the beginnings of the

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<sup>21</sup> Pound’s editorial stubbornness is significant for two reasons. First, the *Glebe* was a journal that printed books in their entirety, hoping thereby to give more than just a taste of a work. Second, the first issue (Sep. 1913) of the *Glebe* included Adolf Wolff’s *Songs, Sighs, and Curses*. The note at the beginning of this issue shows how seriously other poets viewed the ordering of poems: “When asked what sequence he would arrange his poems, Wolff threw the manuscripts in the air, saying ‘Let Fate decide.’ They now appear in the order in which they were picked up from the floor.”

<sup>22</sup> Charles Allen published the first article on the *Glebe* in 1944. Two years later, Allen, with Frederick J. Hoffman and Carolyn F. Ulrich, repeated Allen’s errors in an entry on the *Glebe* in *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*. In 1992, Buchner corrected these errors and also suggested that editorial control from the publishers Alfred and Charles Boni, which Kreymborg thought was stifling, is more evident at the end of the run (when Frank Wedekind’s translated German plays were published) than at the

magazine are easily traceable to Alfred Kreymborg during the summer of 1913.

Kreymborg had the help of Man Ray and Samuel Halpert, but their assistance seems to have ended once the name was agreed upon. After some trouble acquiring a printing press, Kreymborg printed the first number in September 1913 from Ridgefield, NJ.

(Subsequent issues were printed in New York by Alfred and Charles Boni.) Even though the initial issue was made up of a collection of poems by Adolf Wolff called *Songs, Sighs, and Curses*, Kreymborg had wanted to use Pound's Imagist poems instead. But for unknown reasons—perhaps that the Bonis wanted to print it as a book concurrently and needed permissions from *Poetry*—*Des Imagistes: An Anthology* was printed in the February 1914 issue of the *Glebe* and released in book form in New York by Alfred and Charles Boni in March and by Harold Monroe in London in April. The book form of the anthology enjoyed success in New York and London, selling out (at least) in Monroe's Poetry Bookshop. The book was then re-released in New York by Frank Shay in 1917. The progression of Imagism from *Poetry* (in 1913), to the *Glebe* (in 1914) and the three book forms in New York and London (in 1914) and back to New York with a new publisher (in 1917) reveals how influential and popular the anthology was among the poetry-reading public in Britain and the U.S. These various printings are evidence that the anthology was much more than just a small-scale "hit." Imagism was well received and could potentially be sold at a profit.

Having found a suitable publisher for *Des Imagistes*, Pound continues his use of mystery to captivate readers with the materiality of the anthology itself. The anthology

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beginning of the run, as Allen, Hoffman, and Ulrich had argued earlier. Buchner's argument is supported by the omission of Kreymborg's name as editor in late issues.

shows Pound's mastery of the material page through the ways he utilizes various impressions (covers, colors, and editions), bibliographic codes (Greek lettering and epigraphs), and unusual poetic content (in a dubious "DOCUMENTS" section). The material pages of the anthology show how Pound's *Des Imagistes* continued and encouraged an intense discussion of what constituted the "New Poetry," and, even more importantly, the example of the anthology set an intriguing precedent for future modernist poetry anthologies that would follow throughout the coming decades. Because *Des Imagistes* was so popular, anthologies became the primary means of dissemination for modernist poetry, even after Imagism itself lost energy. New Verse anthologies became so important for the early formation of modernist poetry because they signaled the strength and maturity of the movement.

The bibliographic features of the exterior of Pound's anthology show links to the cultural contexts of booksellers and poetry consumers in New York and London. The first edition in the *Glebe* was printed and sold with two distinct covers. The typical format of the *Des Imagistes* cover page, with its green, "organic" title and icon, would have been the most common form that subscribers to the magazine received (see Figure 3 below).

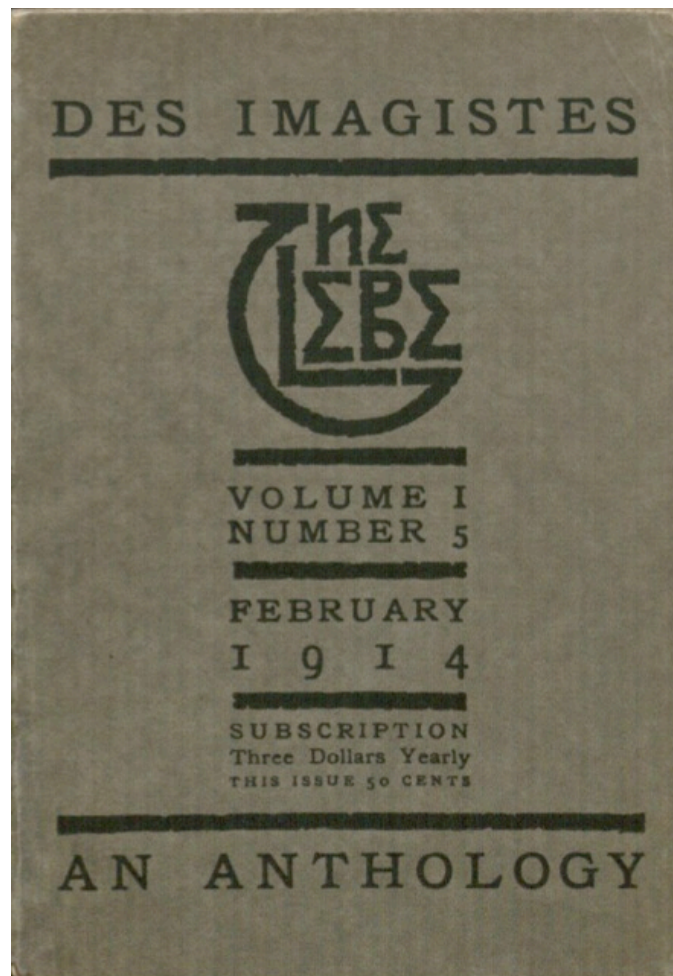


Figure 3. Cover. The *Glebe* 1.5 (Feb. 1914). Northwestern University Library.

Some copies of this early magazine version of the anthology, however, had an additional cover in bright orange with only the title in block letters: “DES IMAGISTES / AN ANTHOLOGY” (See Figure 4). These seem to be the earliest copies of the issue and were probably bookseller copies that would catch the eyes of shoppers in a bookstore like the Washington Square Bookshop (owned by *Glebe* publishers Alfred and Charles Boni).



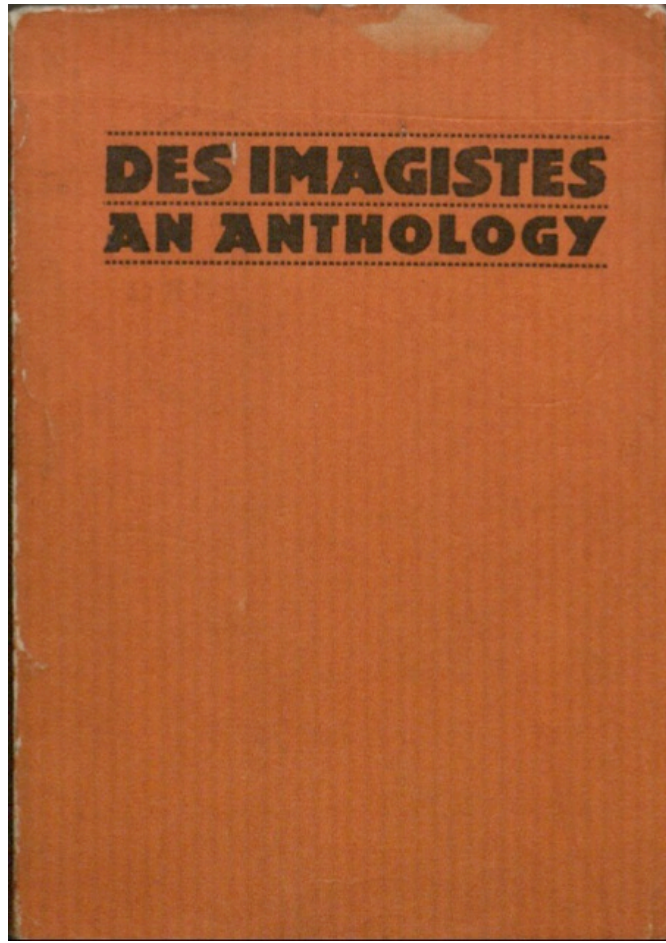


Figure 4. Orange dust cover of the New York Boni edition of *Des Imagistes* (1914), Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Shoppers and local residents of Greenwich Village would have seen this orange copy and understood it to signify something new and avant-garde; it was meant to attract attention. This cover emphasized the vibrancy and newness of the movement, while the more common green cover of the *Glebe* version emphasized its nature as a new and growing entity. The color of the text and cover of the *Glebe* changed each month (using tan, gray, cream, red, and even black).<sup>23</sup> The fact that (apart from the early orange issues) the cover

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<sup>23</sup> The Beinecke Library holds a run of the *Glebe*: Tanselle B51 0001+ Quarto. Some of the text and cover colors from these issues are: 1.1 (Sept. 1913) Adolf Wolff, black and red ink on tan paper; 1:2 (Nov. 1913)

of *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* used green ink on green paper suggests that the editors closely linked the new movement of Imagism with the organic newness of their own journal, whose very title suggested cultivation and growth.

The New York and London book versions of the anthology create completely different expectations for readers, and both versions emphasize the authority of the contents and the movement. The cover of the New York version is a textured, dark blue (see Figure 5 below). The title “DES IMAGISTES” is printed in gold lettering on the front and on the spine. The only name printed on the outside cover is “BONI,” which appears on the spine. Bookseller tickets show that this edition was sold at various New York bookshops, most notably Brentano’s.<sup>24</sup> The New York version, with its dark color and gold lettering, makes the anthology seem classic and authoritative.

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Wallace E. Baker, black ink on tan paper; 1:3 (Dec. 1913) Charles Demuth, blue ink on cream background; 1:5 (Feb. 1914) *Des Imagistes: An Anthology*, black ink on orange paper (other version of this issue is dark green ink on light green paper); 2:1 (April 1914) Horace Traubel, black ink on dark green paper; 2:3 (Oct. 1914) Frank Wedekind, red ink on yellow paper; and 2:4 (probably Nov. 1914 – no month is printed on cover) Frank Wedekind, red ink on black paper.

<sup>24</sup> These stickers can be found on the Yale copies of the blue New York edition of the anthology (BEIN Za P865 914D and BEIN Za1 914Dc). Both have the small, blue ticket that reads “BRENTANO’S / Booksellers & Stationers / New York.”

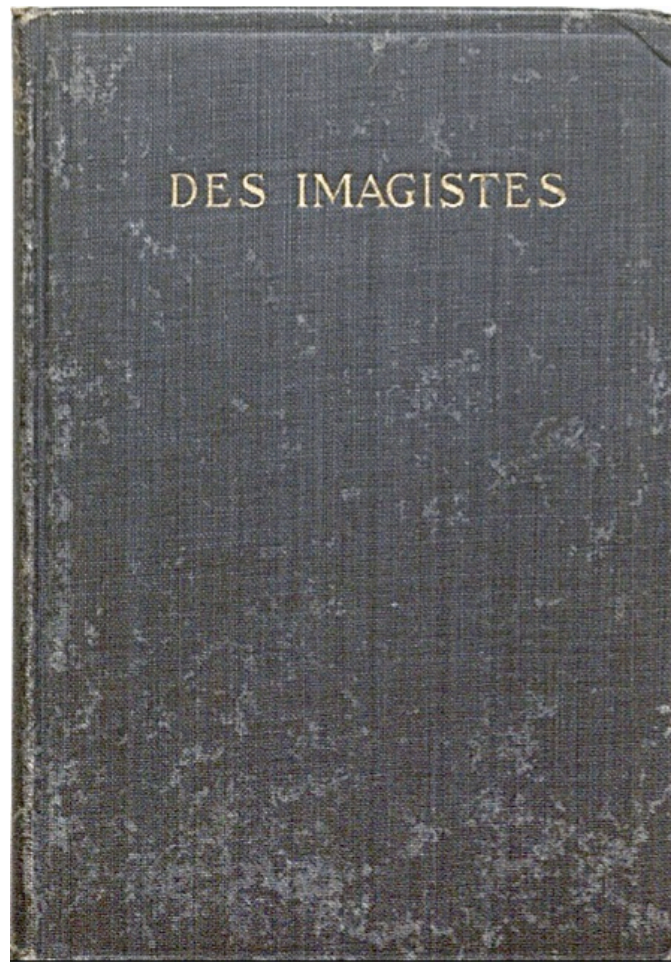


Figure 5. Cover of the New York Boni Edition of *Des Imagistes* (1914), Beinecke Library, Yale University.

In contrast, the London version of the anthology was printed on light green boards with the abbreviated title “IMAGISTES” in black; the spine seems to have been blank (see Figure 6 below).<sup>25</sup> The bottom of the front cover reads “THE POETRY BOOKSHOP” in the same black ink and connects the movement to the activities in Monroe’s store. The London version of the anthology therefore emphasizes the community of the bookshop and its many activities, sacrificing the sense of authority the sparse New York cover

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<sup>25</sup> The light green Poetry Bookshop edition of the anthology is more pervasive; Yale copies are: BEIN Za1 914Db copy 1, BEIN Za1 914Db copy 2, BEIN Za1 914Db copy 3, and BEIN Za1 914Db copy 4.

communicated. The Poetry Bookshop copy (printed in London by Harold Monro) seems to have been more pervasive, and the London version is more common in research libraries in the U.S.<sup>26</sup>

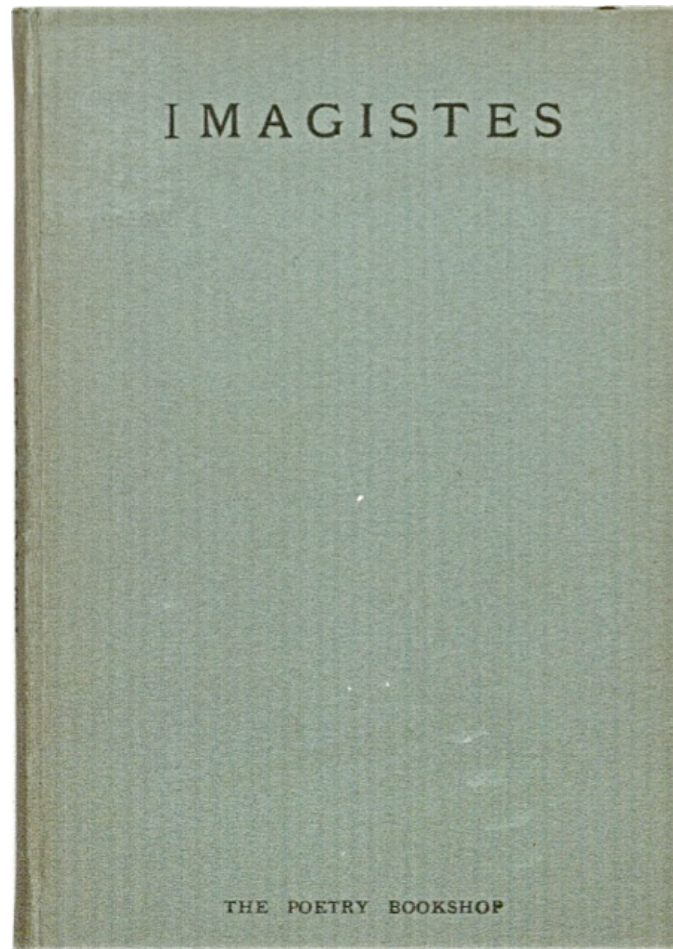


Figure 6. Cover of the London Poetry Bookshop edition of *Des Imagistes* (1914), Beinecke Library, Yale University.

The high number of London copies in the U.S. might also be attributed to the correspondingly high number of American expatriate poets in London at the time, whose

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<sup>26</sup> For example, the Deering Library at Northwestern University holds the Poetry Bookshop and *Glebe* editions but not the New York edition (respective call numbers: 20th Cent Anthology D441 and 20th Cent Am Serial G554 v.1 no.5). The Beinecke Library at Yale also has more Poetry Bookshop editions.

book collections were later brought back to the U.S. and donated to research libraries.

Either way, the two printings in book form strongly show the codification of Imagism as it moved across the Atlantic.

The endurance of the movement can be seen even three or four years later when the New York publisher Frank Shay reprinted a version of the anthology in 1917 (see Figure 7 below). This edition is a blue chapbook with dark red lettering. The cover adds Shay's name, his firm's publishing device (a woman's face), and a new typographical version of the title: "*Des Imagistes: an anthology*" (Shay's italics). This choice of style and font is a self-conscious attempt to emphasize the obvious: the book was an anthology. In its italicized presentation of the subtitle, the Shay edition points back to the collection's origins in the *Glebe*, because the word "anthology" was only printed on the cover in that early magazine edition. Also, the place of publication and sales of the Shay anthology return to the first bookshop where *Des Imagistes* was sold: Shay was the newest proprietor of the Washington Square Bookshop in 1917. The Bonis sold the bookshop to Shay in 1915, and Shay's various experiences (he was a logger, seaman, and actor) and apparent insight told him that 1917 was a good time to bring *Des Imagistes* back to Greenwich Village. The timing of the publication coincides with Amy Lowell's third installment of *Some Imagist Poets*—a set of anthologies that made Imagism very well known in the U.S. Shay must have known that the term was widely recognizable and that a reprint of the original New Verse anthology would be profitable. The title page and contents are identical to the earlier versions with the exception of Shay's publisher information. One final piece of bibliographic information is stuck to the inside back covers of the two copies of the collection housed at Yale. One ticket is from Brentano's,



and the other is from Gotham Book Mart. The Brentano's ticket shows that the anthology was still popular in a different bookstore that also sold the original New York edition a few years earlier.

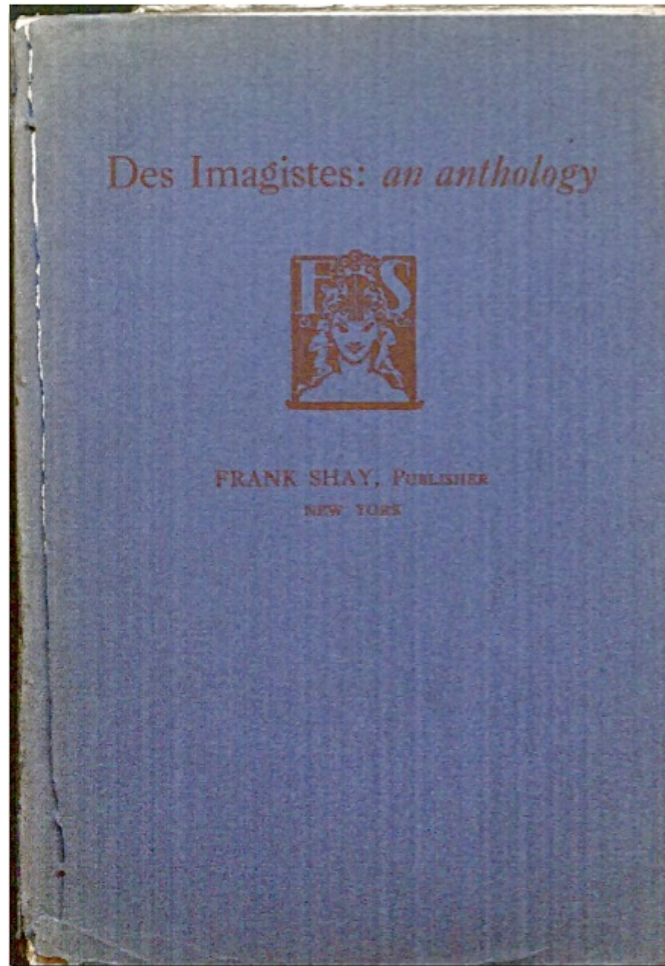


Figure 7. Cover of the New York Shay edition of *Des Imagistes* (1917), Beinecke Library, Yale University.

The Gotham Book Mart sticker shows that the anthology was still popular after 1920 because the bookstore did not begin business until then.<sup>27</sup> The few copies available in research libraries suggests that the Shay reprint was printed in small numbers, but the fact

<sup>27</sup> The red bookseller's ticket reads "Gotham Book Mart, Inc. / 51 West 47th St. NY." After the Gotham Book Mart closed in 2007, its holdings were given to University of Pennsylvania.

that it was reprinted at all and brought back to its original place of sale by a different publisher shows the continued influence of the collection.

Like his other textual strategies, Pound's unique typographical choices imbue *Des Imagistes* with meaning. The pages of the anthology are "open" in format, allowing for one poem per page with expansive margins. This layout allows the poetry to be both primary and unobtrusive; the poems alone guide the reader, without the addition of prose, footnotes, or ornate borders. This simplicity allows slight typographical variations in text, font, and language to stand out. The best example of Pound's typographical technique is his use of Greek words, letters, translations, and transliterations. This strategic and purposeful use of Greek provides a clue to Pound's editorship. Greek is used from the epigraph to the final "DOCUMENTS" section. The epigraph to the volume is presented in Greek with Pound's English translation: "And she also was of Sikilia and was gay in the valleys of Ætna, and knew the Doric singing." The epigraph is an excerpt from the "Epitaph on Bion," a fragment about the first century BC Greek bucolic poet Bion of Smyrna. In a volume of poetry, the word "singing" is conspicuous, and this fact highlights the word "Doric" that describes the singing.<sup>28</sup> By paying attention to this bibliographic detail and Pound's unique use of Greek in the coming pages (for instance, his spelling of Sicily),<sup>29</sup> readers are lead into the classical world Pound was immersed in.

After the Greek epigraph and title page, the reader next encounters the "CONTENTS" list. The only word printed in Greek is Pound's title "Δωρϊα," this time

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<sup>28</sup> Doric is a dialect of ancient Greece (particularly the west); others include Aeolic, Arcadocypriot, Attic, and Ionic.

<sup>29</sup> Pound chose to transliterate Σιχελια to "Sikilia" instead of translating it to the accepted, "Sicily."

using lower-case letters. The astute reader would be able to connect the “Doric song” in the epigraph with Pound’s first poem, and in offering this association, Pound leaves a personal mark on the manuscript. He makes Aldington, H.D., and Flint the primary Imagists by giving them the first three positions in the anthology, but he marks his own distinction as editor even though he shows up eighth. This distinction is underscored by the fact that the title of the Aldington poem “Choricos” was changed into English characters from its original printing in the November 1912 *Poetry* as “ΧΟΡΙΚΟΣ.”

Beyond a signal of ownership and editorial control, this move makes “ΔΩΠΙΑ” a primary poem for the Imagist movement. Pound waited nearly two years to release this anthology, and he wanted to use the best possible example of his own poetry to illustrate Imagism. Of the six short poems by Pound in *Des Imagistes*, only “ΔΩΠΙΑ” and “The Return” had appeared in his earlier books, in this case his 1912 *Ripostes*. The fact that Pound chose to place these two poems – out of the twenty-seven printed in *Ripostes* – in the Imagist anthology suggests that he valued them highly and that “ΔΩΠΙΑ” may have been his inspiration for the epigraph. “ΔΩΠΙΑ” also fits with the theme of loss and absence consistent with the Greek elegy invoked by the epigraph, a theme that becomes prevalent throughout the rest of the anthology. The poem also includes a poetic “us” that seems to extend to all the Imagist poets:

Be in me as the eternal moods  
                                   of the bleak wind, and not  
 As transient things are—  
                                   gaiety of flowers.  
 Have me in the strong loneliness  
                                   of sunless cliffs  
 And of grey waters.  
                                   Let the gods speak softly of us  
 In the days hereafter,



The shadowy flowers of Orcus  
Remember Thee. (41)

Of course H.D.'s "Hermes of the Ways" has the reputation for being the premier poem of Imagism, but what poem did Pound offer as his own best imagistic work? The purposeful use of Greek characters and the careful placement of "ΔΩΠΙΑ" make this poem Pound's most conspicuous and noteworthy contribution to the anthology and perhaps to Imagism in general.

Continuing with an examination of Pound's use of Greek characters leads us to what is perhaps the most mysterious and intriguing part of the anthology: the "DOCUMENTS" section. Pound included three "documents" of Imagism, objects that should help explain the creation, existence, and history of the movement. Under closer inspection, however, these documents reveal a network of personal interactions among three poets: Pound, Richard Aldington, and Ford Maddox Hueffer. The "DOCUMENTS" section is surprisingly humorous and reveals a close group of like-minded poets. (It is no wonder the *New Age* reviewer for April 30, 1914 called the group a "clique" and the "DOCUMENTS" a form of "cultured persiflage.") This last section includes three works that amount to a series of inside jokes that would be puzzling to the average reader—a trait that is in keeping with the characteristics of the anthology from its first mention in *Poetry* in January 1913. Pound's contribution (which is conspicuously left unsigned) is called "To Hulme (T.E.) and Fitzgerald" and is meant to make his fellow poets laugh; take these lines as an example: "My name but mocks the guinea stamp, / And Pound's dead broke for a' that" (7-8). After Pound's contribution to the "DOCUMENTS" section, we get a postscript that reveals his audience: "Written for the cenacle of 1909" (that met

with T.E. Hulme). The next poem, “Vates, The Social Reformer,” signed by “R.A.”

(Richard Aldington), is a parody of Ford Maddox Hueffer’s “On Heaven” (which is not present in the anthology). It begins, “What shall be said of him, this cock-o’-hoop?” and later exclaims, “Dear God of mine, / It’s really most amazing, doncherknow.” The final poem, written by Hueffer, is called “Fragments Addressed By Clearchus H. To Aldi”

(i.e., Aldington) and is ostensibly written in Greek (see Figure 8).<sup>30</sup>

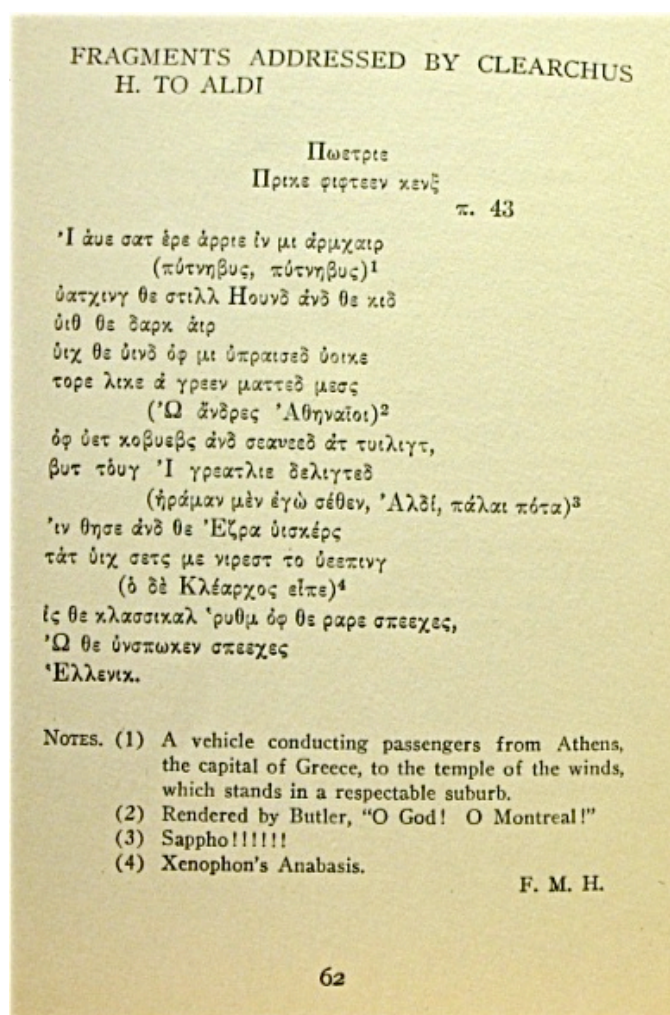


Figure 8. “Fragments” from the New York Boni edition of *Des Imagistes* (1914), Deering Library, Northwestern University.

<sup>30</sup> “CLEARCHUS H.” is a reference to the fourth century B.C. tyrant, Clearchus of Heraclea.

The poem, in keeping with the first two, is also humorous, and the very fact that it purports to be written in Greek (with humorous footnotes) is part of the joke.<sup>31</sup> However, the poem is actually written in English with Greek letters – a transliteration, in this case a parody of Aldington’s “Au Vieux Jardin.” From what we have seen of Pound’s editorial tendencies thus far, Greek is used very purposefully, and the “DOCUMENTS” section would be conspicuous and mysterious to even an informed reader.

The Southern expatriate poet John Gould Fletcher was one reader who was intensely interested in Imagism, *Des Imagistes*, and the “DOCUMENTS” section in particular. Fletcher is best known for his later poetry and is always said to have been individualistic and moody – characteristics that certainly affected his poetry and its publication. Helen Carr describes Fletcher as “a melancholy, withdrawn poet from Arkansas, and as introverted as Pound was extrovert” (227). Despite his individualism, he knew all the important poets of Imagism—later, most significantly, Amy Lowell. With respect to *Des Imagistes*, Fletcher was always on the outside looking in; even when Pound asked him to be a part of the anthology, he refused and in doing so distanced himself from the group. But in spite of his position outside the circle, Imagism and Pound’s anthology had a very strong effect on him. Fletcher’s copy of *Des Imagistes* is a

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<sup>31</sup> In what appears to be an epigraph to this “FRAGMENT,” there is a reference to Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry*. The epigraph reads “Poetry / Price fifteen cents.” “Price fifteen cents” was always printed at the top of each issue of *Poetry*. The price had not changed since the first issue, and every poet who was familiar with the journal would know this. Below this is the notation “π. 43”; this reference is a page number in the second issue of *Poetry* where Aldington was first published. The poem on this page is “Au Vieux Jardin,” the last of his three poems published that month. Other than the British spelling of “colour” on page 11 in *Des Imagistes*, the poems are identical. Pound and Hueffer chose to reference Aldington’s *Poetry* publication because it signals the first printed poems of an Imagist. It is as if the movement had come full circle, from unexplained “school” in *Poetry* to a codified movement in *Des Imagistes*.

testament to his preoccupation with the movement because it shows frequent use and close interaction with the “DOCUMENTS” section.

Fletcher’s copy of the collection – the blue New York edition – is housed at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, and it shows heavy wear and falls open easily, as if he used it often.<sup>32</sup> The blue cover is very faded, and it has white scrapes across the front as if it had often been pulled in and out of a shelf or pile of books. The corners are battered, which suggests use beyond the library; it is probable that Fletcher brought the book with him on his many travels, either in a bag or pocket.<sup>33</sup> The back cover even has faded red finger marks as if he had been reading the book while painting.<sup>34</sup> The markings inside his copy of the anthology also support the argument that he used it often and read it closely.<sup>35</sup> Fletcher’s bold inscription on the inside cover shows he indeed valued his ownership of the book, and it is his close reading of the “DOCUMENTS” section that shows a very strong motivation to understand the contents of the book and the movement.

Fletcher’s desire to decode the “Fragments” poem shows he wanted to know more about

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<sup>32</sup> Yale: BEIN Za1 914Da copy 2: With Autograph of John Gould Fletcher, 1914.

<sup>33</sup> This is in keeping with the chronology of his life for 1914: “Left for a walking trip in the Italian Alps in time to be caught by the outbreak of World War I. Returned to join the Arbuthnots in Cornwall and make plans for marriage to Daisy [Arbuthnot]. In November returned to America...visited Boston, studied Oriental art, proceeded to Chicago to enjoy the Art Institute, and home to Little Rock for Christmas” (Rudolph xxiv).

<sup>34</sup> Fletcher is not known for being a painter, but he said his poetry was modernized by studying the painters of Cubism. It is possible he was experimenting with painting at the same time he was writing *Irradiations*. At the very least, these paint marks remind us of the influence of painting in his poetry. In 1921, Fletcher would write a biography of Paul Gauguin.

<sup>35</sup> The facing page of the inside cover has written in pencil: “THE JOHN GOULD FLETCHER / COLLECTION // Gift of / NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON / YALE 1932.” By this time, Fletcher was beginning to associate with John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and the Southern Agrarians. His personal life was also in upheaval: he left Daisy for Lorna Hyde in 1931, jumped from the upper window of his home in 1932, was institutionalized, and later escaped with the help of his physician and poet Conrad Aiken (Rudolph xxv). This course of events suggests that by the time his copy of *Des Imagistes* was given to Yale, Imagism was far from his mind.

the inner-workings of the Imagist group. Though he had separated himself from them, it becomes clear that he closely followed the movement and wanted to be involved in his own way.<sup>36</sup>

The “Fragments” poem is printed on the left-hand side of page 62 in *Des Imagistes*. In Fletcher’s copy, the facing page 63 is folded in two (vertically) as a place marker, a move that effectively erases the “Bibliography” of poets listed on this page. The spine is also visible between these pages, so it is obvious that Fletcher opened the book to these pages many times. The unnumbered page 64 is blank, and Fletcher used the right-facing page 65 to make a “translation” of the transliterated poem (see Figure 9 below). Comparing his version with Nick Monfort’s at [desimagistes.com](http://desimagistes.com)<sup>37</sup> makes it obvious that Fletcher was no Greek scholar and that he missed some inside jokes as a result. Even so, his “translation” communicates the basic thrust of the poem, which spoofs Aldington’s poetic preoccupation with Hellenism. Hueffer’s poem references Aldington in line 7 (“I loved thee once, Aldi, long ago”<sup>38</sup>) and Pound in line 8 (“the Ezra whiskers”).<sup>39</sup> Even though he missed a couple lines, Fletcher worked hard to decode the Greek lettering, and this material web of relationships amongst Pound, Aldington, and Hueffer leaves Fletcher on the outside of the movement, both relationally and materially.

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<sup>36</sup> Fletcher closely watched the new movement from the very beginning. He wrote to Harriet Monroe about *Poetry* in August of 1913: “From the beginning of your enterprise, I have bought each number of *Poetry*” (Rudolph 1).

<sup>37</sup> Though [desimagistes.com](http://desimagistes.com) is no longer active online, the site (and Monfort’s translation) can be accessed through the Internet Archive’s WayBack Machine.

<sup>38</sup> A direct reference to Sappho’s “I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago.” H.T. Wharton’s various editions of Sappho were popular at the turn of the century, and Hueffer would probably have been familiar with Wharton’s work.

<sup>39</sup> In perhaps a subconscious attempt to distance himself from Aldington and Pound, Fletcher’s “translation” doesn’t attempt an English version of line 7 and leaves out the line about “Ezra” altogether.

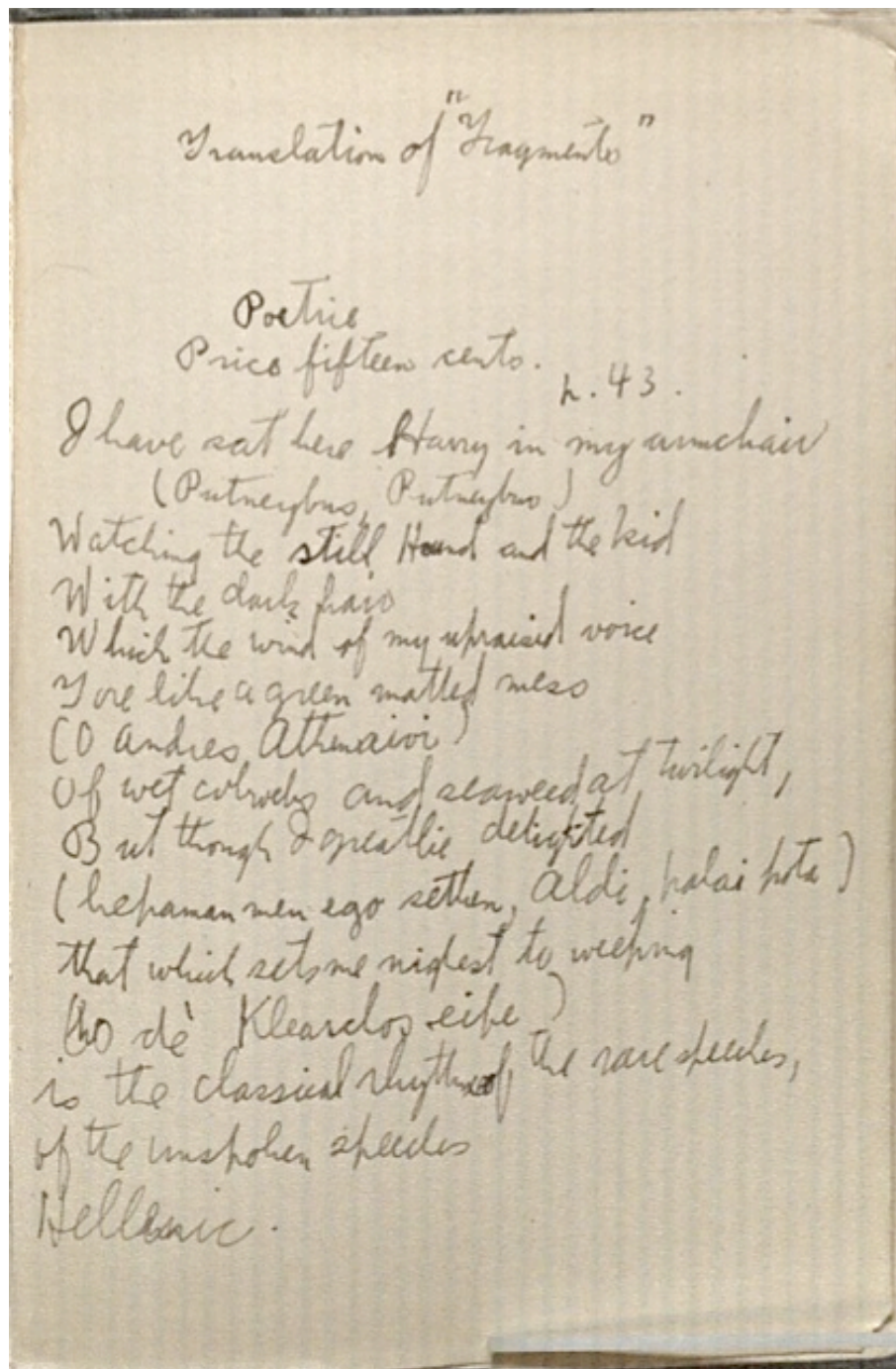


Figure 9. John Gould Fletcher's transcribed translation of "Fragments" from *Des Imagistes* (1914), Beinecke Library, Yale University.

He could hold the book in his hands and understand the poets and the poetry that it contained, but he could not benefit from the creative and personal relationships of the

poets themselves. Fletcher's close interaction with the *Des Imagistes* anthology shows that it was mysterious and captivating to him – from its immaterial creation in Pound's mind and the announcement in *Poetry* to the "DOCUMENTS" section and the very last poem of the collection.

But one wonders how Fletcher could be so captivated by a movement he refused to be a part of. His relationship with Pound and Imagism is complex, and a more in-depth look reveals that Imagism and *Des Imagistes* strongly influenced him in two ways: it forever changed his poetry, and it made him realize the power of the New Verse anthology. Fletcher's relationship with Pound started in 1913 and culminated in a review of two of Fletcher's books by Pound in the December 1913 *Poetry*, the same issue in which the first of Fletcher's *Irradiations* appeared.<sup>40</sup> Over the course of 1910-1913 Fletcher had financed the publication of five of his own books of poetry.<sup>41</sup> And 1913 marked a change in his career, because he met Pound and got to know the other poets from whom he would (as was his practice) end up estranging himself: F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, H.D., and Amy Lowell. In the December 1913 review of *Fire and Wine* and *The Dominant City*, Fletcher is praised in typical Poundian fashion:

For five years he has kept an indifferent silence, and now with an equally indifferent bravura, he puts forth five volumes at once – some of them, or

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<sup>40</sup> His letters show he prided himself on the fact that no one else paid for the publication of his poems and that he never asked for favors or introductions. The following is from a letter to Harriet Monroe dated August 2, 1913: "Recently I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Pound, who seems to have thought that some of my books were worth reading. He has obtained some work from me which I believe he has sent you, and which is probably in your office now. So my ambition to submit to you something has been gratified. But I would have preferred to have done it independently, than to rely on any outside aid" (Rudolph 1).

<sup>41</sup> The books that Pound had discovered by Fletcher were *Fire and Wine*, Grant Richards, Ltd., London, 1913; *Fool's Gold*, Max Goschen, London, 1913; *The Dominant City (1911-1912)*, Max Goschen, London, 1913; *The Book of Nature*, Constable & Co., London, 1913; and *Visions of Evening*, Erskine McDonald, London, 1913.

at least some parts of them good, and at least one of them important.  
 [...] Yet having been convinced by *The Dominant City* that this author is  
 not wholly a fool, one is heartened for the search of the other books.  
 (*Poetry* 3:3, 111-12)

Pound's typical practice of pushing poets and their work upon the public did not go over well with Fletcher, as can be seen in his refusal to be included in *Des Imagistes* and in his letters.<sup>42</sup> His October 1913 letter to Amy Lowell also bears this out: "By the way, I have quarreled with Ezra and I am not to appear in *The Freewoman* nor in the *Anthology*. You see I cannot be as polite to people as he is: I am more at the mercy of my temperament. I found him rather antipathetic, and was obliged to break it off" (qtd. in Rudolf 7). Fletcher was individualistic in every circumstance, and this affected his literary associations; even so, his individualism was not strong enough to keep his poetry from becoming more Imagistic.

Even with the dissolution of his relationship to Pound and Fletcher's refusal to appear in *Des Imagistes*, his poetry changed as a result of his time with Pound and the other Imagists. The poetry of *Fire and Wine* and *The Dominant City* – both written before meeting Pound – are both largely confined to regular rhyme and meter, but there is some evidence of experimentation. The uneven meter and irregular use of rhyme in his poem "Hands" from *Fire and Wine* shows a departure from the rest of the book: "There is great mystery, my love, / In the movement of your hands. / They slide upwards, like the sun, / In silent benediction" (1-4). The striking image in the last four lines of "The Evening Clouds" from *The Dominant City* show why Pound would have been interested in putting Fletcher's poetry into *Des Imagistes*: "Like colonnades along long terraces / Prolonged,

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<sup>42</sup> See note 40.



the colonnades of temples, / Behind whose gates, never opened / Crouch the colossal gods of night” (13-16). The image is at once nostalgic and foreboding, and the speaker conveys a dark mood without resorting to rhetoric. But even though these poems show that Fletcher was experimenting before he knew Pound, almost all of his poetry is more like “Eros,” which is also from *The Dominant City*: “In every stolen glance, in every touch, / In every detail of lust's solemn rite / Repeated endlessly, I drink delight: / Yet fevered, know my thirst is over-much.” (21-24). The regular rhyme and meter coupled with the theme and diction (“glance,” “rite,” “delight,” “fevered”) reveal his bent for traditional modes and his debt to the “Decadent” poetry of the 1890s.

While Fletcher’s early poetry is mostly derivative with the exception of a few experimental attempts, the publication of *Irradiations* in *Poetry* and subsequently in book form in 1915 (*Irradiations*, *Sand and Spray*) show that he had become as much an Imagist as anyone in the anthology. The reasons for this change were the time he spent with Ezra Pound and his relationship, however tenuous, with the Imagists and their poetry. In *Irradiations*, Fletcher abandons regular rhyme and meter for more natural cadences, like these lines from Part V: “My breath is the music of the mad wind; / Shrill piping, stamping of drunken feet: / The fluttering, tattered broidery flung / Over the dunes’ steep escarpments” (13-16). And even though Pound’s anthology itself did not directly affect Fletcher’s poetry until it was published in February 1914, the energy of a new movement (as seen in the pages of *Poetry*) and the very organization of an anthology of Imagists were enough to influence his poetry. In fact, Fletcher’s poetry changed just as

much as it would have had his decision to be included in the anthology been different.<sup>43</sup> In his well-researched *John Gould Fletcher and Imagism* (1978), Edmund de Chasca argues that “Fletcher very nearly did take part in the first imagist anthology, but his mixed feelings towards the leaders of the group held him back. Although a theoretical opposition to imagism contributed to his negative decision, it could have been easily overcome had Pound handled him more delicately” (35). Whether he liked it or not (and it is obvious he did not), Fletcher was a de facto Imagist.<sup>44</sup>

But it was not just Fletcher’s poetry that changed as a result of Imagism and *Des Imagistes*. Fletcher also became a strong proponent of the New Verse anthology after *Des Imagistes* was published. He was intensely interested in the anthology from the very beginning (“very strongly” advising Amy Lowell to stay out of it in a September 1913 letter), and his frequent encounters with the actual pages possibly make him the poet who most closely interacted with the collection. Though he refused to enter the anthology, he was still interested in the book and the movement by the time it was published. Just weeks after the New York edition of *Des Imagistes* was published, Fletcher was writing to Amy Lowell (in a letter dated April 7, 1914): “I have made up my differences with

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<sup>43</sup> To further examine the issue of poetic influence, Fletcher’s Part V in the December 1913 *Poetry* makes an interesting comparison with H.D.’s “Hermes of the Ways.” Compare his “The wind that drives the fine dry sand / Over the strand: / The salt wind spinning arabesques / With a wrinkled hand” (1-4) to her “Far off over the leagues of it, / The wind, / Playing on the wide shore, / Piles little ridges, / and the great waves / Break over it” (4-9).

<sup>44</sup> Fletcher would not have been amongst the best poets in the anthology, however, because his poetry is often heavy-handed and too outwardly self-conscious. In *Irradiations*, his use of consonance and internal rhyme are jarring: “Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing / Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades” (“II,” lines 5-6). Fletcher’s diction and the frequent use of the first person are also in keeping with his earlier works: “Oh, I could lie on my back all day, / And mark the mad ballet of the midsummer sky” (“I,” lines 7-8) and “Oh, all you stars up yonder, / Do you hear me?” (“VIII,” lines 1-2). Ezra Pound took issue with Fletcher’s approach, which can be seen in an edited manuscript of *Irradiations* that Fletcher called “mistakes marked by Pound” (Chasca 23).

Pound and have even written an Imagist work, *The Blue Symphony*, a copy of which I am sending you. I think Pound is certainly a fine critic, although as a poet we are still poles asunder in personality, if not method” (Rudolph 10). In the next sentence of this letter, Fletcher refers to *Des Imagistes* and says, “The *Anthology* disappoints me.” His comments are equivocal, but Fletcher cannot shake his association and fascination with the movement and its primary material artifact.

Six months later, Fletcher shows that he still wanted to be a part of the Imagist movement and its next New Verse anthology; he did not want to be left out the next time around. In a letter to Amy Lowell dated October 29, 1914 he writes:

As for myself, I object to most anthologies, but am willing to take part in *any* in which a perfectly fair field is shown. I didn’t think it was the case of the Imagist volume. I may have been mistaken. Ezra, however, rubbed me up the wrong way – likewise Aldington. I like Aldington a lot better now, and think him fair-minded. Ezra I *never* will be able to endure. As for yourself, you have put me so far into your debt that if my support is of any earthly use to you, you are quite welcome to it. (Rudolph 15)

Fletcher saw Lowell as a prime ally; she was his connection to the Imagist movement as it continued. One final excerpt from a letter to Lowell (dated January 29, 1915) shows that he could not have been more energized about his inclusion in Lowell’s new Imagist anthology, *Some Imagist Poets*:

I am glad after all that it is to be a fight with Ezra on the old ground. In fact, I think if I were in command of the anthology’s destiny, I would call it *The Imagist Poets* instead of *Some*. But it is not a question of priority, or superiority, or any of the things on which Ezra sets so much store and which, incidentally, he has no right to claim unto himself at all. We have a perfect right to call ourselves Imagists and to snap our fingers at him – if Houghton Mifflin can stand the torrent of abuse that will follow, I think we can.

Fletcher had finally found a voice and an Imagist circle in which he could play an integral part. Fletcher's close reading of *Des Imagistes* and his involvement in *Some Imagist Poets*, then, are the best examples of what Pound was hoping would happen with the collection. He wanted readers to pick it up and to be mystified, all the while expecting the poets who wrote and presented their work to begin writing a new kind of poetry.

### **The Influence of *Des Imagistes***

Whether it is ultimately considered innovative literature or the key piece of an elaborate advertising scheme, Pound's anthology could not have been presented in a more suitable or successful manner. *Des Imagistes* forced readers to talk to others and read reviews in order to understand the movement, all the while creating a dramatic change in the poets themselves. The early reviewers' responses to *Des Imagistes* are a case in point: the reviews show that the collection was the object of serious controversy, both for its formal experimentation and perhaps also for its contentious content. A letter from Richard Aldington to Pound in the summer of 1914 describes the first reviews of the anthology:

You have seen the reviews of the Imagistes? New Age first – malignant squelch. Herald next; working man's natural bewilderment at first being introduced to a gentleman. Morning Post says we are a 'new Via Lactea,' 'this slim gracious volume' etc. Thomas in New Weekly says we are like a marble column and that Flint is the ivy about our base. Fat Ford in the Outlook says he feels like a gargoyle in the midst of the Elgin Marbles. (qtd. in Carr 651)

*Des Imagistes* was difficult, and this caused many reviews to border on the dismissive.

Under the title "American Notes," the *New Age* printed its "malignant squelch" in a review by "E.A.B" on April 30, 1914, which discussed the *Glebe* edition of the anthology. This reviewer found no satisfaction in the poets or their poetry and could not grasp any purpose for the collection: The title "suggested some youthful clique of the

Boulevard Raspail.... [Aldington] was in an excessively Attic mood...but of the meaning or necessity of 'imagiste,' not a trace." The short review ends with a misspelling and evidence that the anthology was not understood: "But what has this to do with 'imaginism?'" (817). Ford Maddox Hueffer's review, on the other hand, was positive and was published in two installments in the *Outlook* for May 9 and May 16, 1914. Even though he was a contributor to the collection, he does separate himself from the rest of the group by the fact that "the only poem that is rhymed is my own" (Saunders 153). He praises the "unrhymedness" (153) of the poets and ends with this: "This tiny anthology of the Imagists contains an infinite amount of pure beauty—of abstract beauty" (154). These two reviews illustrate the divergence of opinion possible in the reviews, but Helen Carr also reveals that "several of the purchasers of the English edition returned their copies of *Des Imagistes* and demanded their money back, presumably on the grounds that it was not in fact poetry" (651).<sup>45</sup> Peter Ackroyd quotes Aldington, who called the book a "success de' scandale," and also notes that the volume sold out in London (27). Both the positive and negative reviews added to the confusion about the definition and purpose of Imagism and contributed to the overall attraction of the anthology amongst readers.

If some reviewers were at a loss when faced with Imagism, the movement itself took loss as a central thematic concern; this is in keeping with Pound's chosen epigraph for the anthology that references the form of the elegy ("Epitaph for Bion"). Imagism began in mystery, with readers longing to understand more about the movement. Once

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<sup>45</sup> It is also at least possible that some of these "purchasers" brought the volume back because of its many sexual references. Richard Aldington's "In the Via Sestina" (15) calls the subject of his poem a harlot and describes her this way: "Straight & slim art thou / As a marble phallus" (5-6). F.S. Flint, Skipwith Cannel, and Amy Lowell also have provocative subject matter in their poems. Reviewers of *Des Imagistes* were not as easily offended, however, and mostly stuck with formal criticisms of the book.

the anthology is delivered, this feeling of readerly longing is conflated with and re-emphasized by the content of the poems. At the beginning of the anthology, Pound puts the earliest published Imagist first, giving Richard Aldington ten poems and thirteen pages. Aldington's poems set the tone for the magazine, one of solemnity, longing, and loss. His poem "Choricos" begins, "The ancient songs / Pass deathward mournfully" (7), and readers cannot escape this theme until the last poem in the collection, John Cournos's "The Rose," where we are left with this line: "In the end nothing remains but a handful of petals of what was once a proud flower..." (54, ellipses in original). These two poems act as book ends; they hold together thirty-three poems that all address in some manner at least one of the following themes: death; loss; longing; absence; sadness; silence; unfulfilled, fleeting, or lost love; and broken or painful beauty—all themes that emphasize the unknown and that are doubly presented in a way that leaves much unsaid and unfulfilled. Each poet adds to this effect in some way, and thus the thematic content of absence and longing connects with Pound's earlier use of the immaterial to promote his *New Verse* anthology.

Further examples abound. The first poem in the collection, Aldington's aforementioned "Choricos," personifies death as a "healing wind / that blowest over white flowers / A-tremble with dew" (8) and introduces a friendly death: "the illimitable quietude / Comes gently upon us" (9). Aldington's "Beauty Thou Hast Hurt Me Much" gives us "beautiful sorrow" (13). The speaker in H.D.'s "Priapus" cries out, "Spare us from loveliness!" and "Thou has flayed us with thy blossoms; / Spare us the beauty / Of fruit trees" (24). While Slawomir Wacior argues that sorrow, loneliness, nostalgia, the past, evanescence, and death are the most prominent in Richard Aldington's poems, these

themes also permeate the whole collection. Themes of loneliness and loss especially create a feeling in the reader that real poetry has been lost and that the Greeks had it right. The mournful absence of the old poetry (and its resurrection in Imagist poems) highlights the loss of an ideal Greek poetry and puts the Imagist movement into stark relief as something at once new and old.

Though their poems created the content for the anthology, some of the poets themselves used *Des Imagistes* more as an object than a collection of new, cutting-edge poetry. F.S. Flint gave one copy as a gift to Violet Hunt.<sup>46</sup> The inscription reads: “For much of me / as is here / may Violet Hunt / smile on it with kindness / FSFlint.” This copy was also signed by Ford Maddox Hueffer, which indicates that he later took ownership of the book from his ex-lover Hunt. Other than these markings on the inside cover, the book shows little evidence of use.<sup>47</sup> H.D.’s copy of the anthology also shows little use and is simply signed “H.D. Aldington” on the inside cover.<sup>48</sup> Poets who were included in *Des Imagistes* made use of the anthology in different ways (as a gift or an example of first publication), and the idea of ownership and physical transmission is stressed in each case. The books may have been the topic of conversation at a Hunt “salon” or between wife and husband (H.D. and Aldington), but whatever the case actually was, these poets used the book more as an object than a text. Real interaction with the book seems to be non-existent, and this may be true because these poets knew

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<sup>46</sup> A dynamic literary figure in London literary circles, Hunt created “a literary and artistic *salon* in her house” (Lindberg-Seyersted 3). Ford Maddox Hueffer introduced Pound to Hunt in 1908 or 1909.

<sup>47</sup> Yale: BEIN Za1 914Db copy 1.

<sup>48</sup> Yale: BEIN Za1 914Db copy 2. This copy is the best condition of any I have seen, and the autograph is certainly written in H.D.’s unique handwriting.

what was in the anthology and didn't see it as a direct influence on their own poetry writing.

Instead, *Des Imagistes* was the material culmination of years of work for many poets—for instance, H.D., who, when she first moved to London in 1911, was hoping to become part of the poetry scene.<sup>49</sup> Many of the poets in *Des Imagistes* had similar aspirations, had published little if anything, and were eager to see their poems in print. The moment was ripe, and London provided a place for poets to gather – and gather they did. Pound and others had met with T.E. Hulme in 1909 and called themselves the Poets' Club. By 1912, Pound was meeting with other poets at the Eiffel Tower restaurant in Soho. But neither of these groups produced *Des Imagistes*.<sup>50</sup> Pound's anthology does not showcase the work of an already established group; instead, it tries to establish a group by means of an anthology. Choosing some poets from outside his various acquaintances (James Joyce and Allen Upward for instance), Pound used *Des Imagistes* to create and codify a new and separate movement. Aaron Jaffe calls anthologies a “simulation of literary society” (137), and Pound's anthology was that and more: it was a simulation of an *imagined* literary society.<sup>51</sup> Pound's anthology succeeded in creating the sense of an

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<sup>49</sup> In a similar fashion, Robert Frost arrived in London in September 1912, secured a publisher for *A Boy's Will*, met Pound early in 1913, and had his first book reviewed by Pound in *Poetry* (May 1913). Though modern, Frost was not amenable to the Imagist project; he is, however, a good example of the popular idea that Americans could find poetic success in England because American editors found no value in new poetry.

<sup>50</sup> We should remember that the Rhymers' Club produced two anthologies (*The Book of the Rhymers' Club*, 1892 and *The Second Book of the Rhymers' Club*, 1894), and T.E. Hulmes's Poets' Club produced four anthologies (two in 1909 and one each in 1911 and 1913; see Pondrom). It is natural for a group of likeminded poets to produce an anthology of their own poetry. The ways these two groups used the anthology are a good contrast to Pound's use that created both a group and a movement.

<sup>51</sup> Aldington, H.D., Flint, and Pound are the main Imagists in the anthology. Literary history tells us that Amy Lowell became an Imagist after reading *Poetry* and being involved in *Des Imagistes*. William Carlos Williams certainly wrote Imagist poetry but was too far removed (geographically and otherwise) to be a



energetic movement, but the actual existence of any kind of organized group came after the publication of *Des Imagistes*. The process and publication of the anthology, however, created an actual movement, and this movement created real change in the way poets wrote poetry—which, as the events leading up to *Des Imagistes* and the later New Verse anthologies show, is what Pound had in mind. In this, his ultimate goal, *Des Imagistes* was an undisputed success.

With Imagism, Pound had launched the most impressive advertising campaign for poetry in the twentieth century, even if he ended up losing control of the movement when Amy Lowell entered the picture. As William Pratt puts it, “At the crucial stage of Imagist development one master propagandist was vanquished by another” (20). Even if it was Lowell who made Imagism a name to remember and who created the Imagist anthologies that most people would purchase, it was Pound who created the immaterial anthology that mystified readers and later became a material object. It was Pound who succeeded in making the collection popular, and it was his editing that modernized the poetry anthology form. *Des Imagistes* was pivotal for the beginning of modernist poetry because all the editors of future New Verse anthologies were intimately familiar with the process the collection went through, from its first mention in *Poetry* to its last publication in New York.<sup>52</sup> Each of the future editors would have to respond to Pound’s *Des Imagistes* in some way as they created their own New Verse anthologies.

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prime adherent. Skipwith Cannell, James Joyce, Ford Maddox Hueffer, Allen Upward, and John Cournos were all associated with Pound and Imagism in varying degrees but were more well-known for other work.

<sup>52</sup> These editors knew Pound and *Des Imagistes* well: Amy Lowell, *Some Imagist Poets* (1915-17); Alfred Kreymborg, *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse* (1916 and 1917); Harriet Monroe, *The New Poetry: An Anthology* (1917); and, to a lesser degree, Louis Untermeyer, *Modern American Poetry* (1919).

## CHAPTER TWO

### “FOR THIS IS OURS!”: LITERARY REGIONS AND CULTURAL OWNERSHIP IN THREE NEW VERSE ANTHOLOGIES, 1915-17

The first issue of the *New Republic* was published on November 7, 1914 in New York, and the weekly's slogan was printed on the cover: “A Journal of Opinion which Seeks to Meet the Challenge of a New Time.”<sup>1</sup> The “challenge” is most obviously related to progressive politics in the United States, and this political focus has by and large been the general conception of the weekly over time.<sup>2</sup> But a battle over art is also wrapped up in the “challenge of a new time,” and discussions about the function of art are an important focus of the weekly from the beginning. The first issue includes two articles on art, the first written by Rebecca West and called “The Duty of Harsh Criticism.” West points out the “faintness of spirit” in “men of letters” and argues for a turn from “the

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<sup>1</sup> A number of newspapers and journals have used the name *New Republic* over the years, most notably the socialist newspaper founded by Francis Barry on April 5, 1862. The prospectus of Barry's publication sounds familiar: “Devoted to Governmental and all Other Reforms.”

<sup>2</sup> David W. Noble's 1951 article, “The *New Republic* and the Idea of Progress: 1914-1920,” argues that “Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl, and Walter Lippmann, who were instrumental in the establishment of the *New Republic* in 1914 as the harbinger of an actual new republic, could leave no dynamic legacy of liberalism to the next generation because the heart of their philosophy – the culmination of progress in an evolutionary, middle-class Utopia, created by rational and good men – was shattered” (388). Noble's narrative about forward-thinking men with failed projects reflects the general conception of the weekly until nearly fifty years later, when Eric Rauchway resituates the story of the *New Republic*'s creation in his 1999 article “A Gentleman's Club in a Woman's Sphere: How Dorothy Whitney Straight Created the New Republic.” Typically, Dorothy Straight has been characterized as an uninformed benefactor of the male-edited magazine, but Rauchway argues that Straight funded the *New Republic* because she “thought of such institutions as effective means to bridge the gap between feminine and masculine spheres, as a way of profoundly impressing herself on that world of politics she found so irresistibly interesting” (79).

pompous tradition of eighteenth century ‘book English’” (19). The second article, “Panic in Art,” was written by Lee Simonson, who repeats the call for change: “art, which has been the courtesan of princes and the holiday playmate of republics is dead...[but] a new art made possible by a new freedom is to begin” (20). Readers of the *New Republic* were interested in political and artistic movements, and articles like these gave readers the knowledge and vocabulary to enter the discussion themselves. In fact, the weekly’s literary ads and poetry selections would have specifically prepared readers for a pointed discussion of Imagism that began in May 1915.<sup>3</sup>

This discussion of Imagism came out in a series of articles published during the spring and summer of 1915, and it offered readers a window into the controversy surrounding the new poetry. In his May 22, 1915 review for the *New Republic*, Conrad Aiken discusses the “The Place of Imagism,” which advocates an informal program of marginalization.<sup>4</sup> He writes, “when, indeed, the imagists have become nothing but a very

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<sup>3</sup> The regularly interspersed advertisements from the first volume of the *New Republic* confirm the literary bent of the weekly even though many of the ads in the first volume were political (Nov. 1914 to Jan. 1915). For example, the Macmillan Company used full-page ads to push popular poetry by Rabindranath Tagore, John Masefield, Percy McKaye, and even Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Tucked away in the ads at the back of the magazine, Albert and Charles Boni marketed their more experimental goods from earlier in the year, most of which were first published in the *Glebe* (whose last issue was November 1914). The ad headlined Frank Wedekind’s *Erdgeist* (first translated and published in the *Glebe*, Oct. 1914), followed by Horace Traubels *Chants Communal* (his *Collects* was published in the *Glebe*, April 1914), Leonido Andreyev’s *Love of One’s Neighbor* (the *Glebe*, Jan. 1914, and later published by Alfred A. Knopf), Jose Echegaray’s *Mariana*, and finally, *Des Imagistes: An Anthology* (which was listed at the bottom of the ad and included the names of Ezra Pound, Ford Maddox Hueffer, Richard Aldington, and Amy Lowell). In these repeated ads and in other parts of the weekly, the *New Republic* introduced the biggest names of the new poetry to its readers: Amy Lowell’s *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds* (Dec. 1914), Robert Frost’s “Death of a Hired Man” (Feb. 1915), Edgar Lee Masters’s *Spoon River Anthology* (Mar. 1915), *Some Imagist Poets* (Apr. 1915), and Houghton Mifflin’s *New Poetry Series* (Apr. 1915). In addition to all of this, there was a special issue published in April called “The Spring Literary Supplement.”

<sup>4</sup> Aiken is a transplant to Boston from Georgia. He spent his teen years in Massachusetts with relatives after his parents were murdered. He went to Harvard, where he co-edited the *Advocate* with T.S. Eliot in 1908. Literary critic Joseph Killorin said, “Eliot was a year older than Aiken, and wiser in every visible way”; the two stayed in touch over the years as Aiken became known as a novelist and “professional reviewer” (qtd. in Donoghue 199).

loud-voiced little mutual-admiration society, surely the time has arrived when they should be adjusted to their places. They may do themselves, and possibly other poets, great harm” (75). Places? Aiken is tired of the critical acclaim the Imagist movement was attracting (a year after Ezra Pound’s *Des Imagistes* was published and only a month after Amy Lowell’s *Some Imagist Poets* appeared). Not only did Aiken believe they were receiving more than their due, but he also thought their poetry failed to live up to its reputation: “We take the imagists too seriously, or rather, they take themselves too seriously. They are not doing anything new or anything great” (75).<sup>5</sup> For Aiken, Imagism should be left out of serious conversations of poetry, which isn’t surprising given his reputation.<sup>6</sup>

Less than a month later, on June 12, 1915, William Stanley Braithwaite responded to Aiken’s article with his own: “Imagism: Another View.” Braithwaite begins by calling Aiken’s review “an ingenious attempt...to define the *place* of imagism in contemporary poetry”; however, he continues: “It is a comparatively easy task to differentiate a ‘new’ movement in art, but a difficult process to *place* it in the constantly shifting ground of artistic progress” (154, emphasis added). The state of poetry in the 1910s certainly was “shifting ground” artistically, with new movements appearing every year—Pound had

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<sup>5</sup> Eliot might agree with some of what Aiken is suggesting. Though Eliot is not so outspoken about Imagism in particular, he is very critical of *vers libre*. His “Reflections on Vers Libre” (1917) doesn’t attack Imagism, “which is a theory about the use of material”; he is “only concerned with the theory of the verse-form in which imagism is cast,” saying “[vers libre] is a battle-cry of freedom, and there is no freedom in art” (184). Also, more bluntly: “Vers Libre does not exist” and is a “preposterous fiction” (183).

<sup>6</sup> Though Aiken’s life was very similar to that of other poets and critics in Boston, his reputation was that of a critical outsider. Lorenzo Thomas points out that Aiken “insisted on attacking the new poetry movement” and “much to their mutual annoyance, always bracket[ed] Braithwaite and Harriet Monroe as targets for his critical abuse” (89). Pound put him “among the hostile horde of reactionaries who were always deriding experimental verse in the name of stuffy orthodoxy” (Butscher 208).

already moved on from Imagism to the short-lived Vorticism by 1914. The *New Republic* readership was hoping to find information to help them make up their minds about all this “progress.” Both Aiken and Braithwaite tried to help by negotiating the “place” of Imagism for readers. For his part, Braithwaite believed Imagists were doing something new and compelling: “I approached the work of the Imagists with considerable doubt, but soon found myself surrendering to an influence that was different from any other in the poetry of the day. It was often deeper than the theme of the poem – it was a force, an element, which created beauty on a strange new pattern” (155). For Braithwaite, the strength of Imagism was in its “magical” ability to evoke new patterns of thought (154). He believed, in spite of Aiken, that Imagism deserved a respected place in critical circles; he even pledged his allegiance to the Imagist cause in a letter to Amy Lowell, saying, “the enemies of Imagism are all about our heads.”<sup>7</sup> Braithwaite and Lowell were literary compatriots from Boston, and he treated her cause sympathetically even while denigrating other Imagists.<sup>8</sup>

As Aiken and Braithwaite negotiate in the *New Republic*, Amy Lowell and Richard Aldington self-consciously mention their own desire to create “a place for ourselves” in the unsigned preface to *Some Imagist Poets*.<sup>9</sup> One purpose of the short

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<sup>7</sup> August 22, 1915. Houghton Library, Harvard University. “Letters of William Stanley Braithwaite (1878-1962) to Amy Lowell.”

<sup>8</sup> Braithwaite’s defense of Imagism was limited, perhaps most narrowly to Lowell and the poets in *Some Imagists Poets*. In *The Poetic Year for 1916*, he attacks Pound’s poetry in particular, critiquing “this eager, pitiful striving after effect; this cunning attempt to attract bizarre illusions; this utter disregard for all decency of thought and feeling” (82).

<sup>9</sup> In *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, Jayne Marek recounts the accepted authorship of the prefaces as follows. Aldington wrote most of the 1915 with heavy help from Lowell. John Gould Fletcher wrote the longer 1916 preface, and there was no preface for the 1917 volume, suggesting Imagism had somehow found its place and no longer needed to justify itself (158-59).

preface is to make obvious the “different paths” they have taken from Ezra Pound and *Des Imagistes*, and it ends with the following sentence: “We wish it to be clearly understood that we do not represent an exclusive sect; we publish our work together because of mutual sympathy, and we propose to bring out our coöperative volume each year for a short term of years, until we have made a *place* for ourselves and our principles such as we desire” (viii, emphasis added). Taking into account the military and revolutionary diction used earlier in the preface (“banded together,” “fight,” “liberty,” and “freedom”), Lowell and Aldington claim to fight for a respected place in a realm colonized by harsh and unforgiving critics.<sup>10</sup> They are strategically situating themselves within the broader discussion about the new poetry that is presented in the pages of a New York publication (the *New Republic*) and placed before critics in Boston and beyond.

The two reviews in *New Republic* and the preface to *Some Imagist Poets* begin to show how publications can be representative of geographic regions, and in doing so, become archetypes of those regions.<sup>11</sup> The first New Verse anthology (*Des Imagistes*)

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<sup>10</sup> Lowell even compares the new movement in poetry to the war in the preface to her critical volume *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (1917): “In fact, the war and the subject of this volume are not so far apart as might at first appear. The so-called ‘new movement’ in American poetry is evidence of the rise of a native school” (v). In his May 22, 1915 review, Conrad Aiken agrees (but only sarcastically): “Miss Lowell’s work is as important an event in the world of poetry as the European war is in the world of politics” (75).

<sup>11</sup> When I use the term region, I do so without trying to invoke the connotations of the term “American regionalism” as an artistic movement or (somewhat derogatory) critical category. My idea of “region” in this chapter has more to do with urban centers and their environs than large geographic areas like “New England” or the “Midwest.” My notion of region is a kind of regional autonomy that is linked to cities rather than rural areas. More specifically, the anthologies I am writing about reflect ideas and tastes not only of the city but also a particular intellectual class within that city. Though I do not use his work in this chapter, Roberto Dainotto’s *Place in Literature* (2000) is a fruitful source to continue thinking about the possible ways of using the term region. He questions the “ideological construction of place” and suggests that the “regional outlook” is still vital and is the “only alternative to the ‘imposed’ cultural unity of national literature” (2, 5).

was an international commodity organized in London by Ezra Pound and published out of Ridgefield, New Jersey (subsequently New York and London). But until *Some Imagist Poets* was published, Boston had little cultural ownership of the new poetry. These observations raise important questions. How do New Verse anthologies inform or reveal regional biases? How do books communicate different meanings depending on the region of publication? And what regional assumptions underlie the selection and organization of New Verse anthologies? These questions are all clarified in the lives and work of three anthology editors: Amy Lowell, Alfred Kreymborg, and Harriet Monroe. All three used New Verse anthologies to create strategic places for poetry, but each editor (and collection) represented a different region in the U.S. and thus a distinct critical approach to poetry and publication.<sup>12</sup> Not only do anthologies make critical spaces by validating poetry, but they also reveal hidden cultural assumptions about poets, editors, and their communities.

Each editor's cultural assumptions and critical approach can be seen in the way she or he associates physical space and literature. Lowell compares the patterned "flowers" of the new poetry to the classical, cultivated gardens of the wealthy: "Then our native flowers will bloom into a great garden, to be again conventionalized to a pleasance of stone statues and mathematical parterres awaiting a new change which shall displace

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<sup>12</sup> Each editor necessarily situates his or her anthology in relation to the mysterious first New Verse anthology, Ezra Pound's *Des Imagistes*. Each poet knew Ezra Pound directly. Lowell was published in his *Des Imagistes* (1914) and visited him in London, Monroe invited him to be the foreign correspondent for *Poetry*, and Kreymborg was the first to publish *Des Imagistes* wholesale in the February 1914 issue of the *Glebe*. Because each editor was so closely connected to Pound and *Des Imagistes*, and because each editor came from such different backgrounds, they each necessarily responded to Pound's anthology and the ideas about the new poetry in very different ways. Pound even responded to his own anthology with *Catholic Anthology, 1914-15*. It was largely unsuccessful, partly because of the title but also because of its publication history. I do not discuss this anthology here because I discuss it in the conclusion when I show the lasting significance of all of Pound's collections.

it. This is the perpetually recurring history of literature, and of the world” (*Tendencies* 238). Alfred Kreymborg believes that poetry needs to be nurtured in a bohemian gathering place like Alfred Stieglitz’s gallery 291 in New York. In a chapter called “Housing the Moderns” (from his third-person autobiography *Troubadour*), he wishes for a literary equivalent of 291: “After coming away from these gatherings, Krimmie was often assailed with the wistful notion that if the young literary men of the town had a haunt like this one, something in the nature of a concerted movement might at last be born among them” (166). Finally, Harriet Monroe calls *Poetry* “a modest effort to give to poetry her own place, her own voice” (“The Motive of the Magazine” 27) and uses architectural metaphors to compare *Poetry* to established homes for art: “the Art Institute opens new galleries – much more spacious than our magazine-gallery for poets” (“Then and Now” 142). These editors’ New Verse anthologies create different narratives that give the collections and the poetry inside specific and distinct meanings—meanings that have not been fully discussed in our recent attempts to reconstruct the era.

The culturally informed metaphors Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe use display their critical allegiances and introduce the function of their respective anthologies. This chapter uncovers the surprisingly overlooked cultural values of these editors and their fraught relationships to the new poetry and to each other. Their respective New Verse anthologies were organized, published, and received by different kinds of readers—audiences who were as different culturally as they were geographically. Amy Lowell used her cultural (and economic) capital to make Imagism palatable to critics and ultimately to make it acceptable in the high-cultural institutions of Boston. Alfred Kreymborg gave a voice to poetic experimentation in the avant-garde circles of New



York in order to validate new modes of life and thought present in Greenwich Village culture. And Harriet Monroe tried to provide recognition for a wide swath of “new” poetry and poets—all from her headquarters in Chicago, a city that itself badly wanted recognition. Each New Verse anthology is organized (consciously or not) to reflect the regional assumptions of the editor, which limit reception and reveal entrenched modes of thought, especially in terms of class and race. Put simply, literary regions determine the creation and reception of New Verse anthologies and influence the meaning of poems by way of regional biases.

### **Traditional Accounts and Methodology**

In traditional accounts of the history of modernist poetry, literary figures function as the actors and creators of new forms and movements of poetry. Seemingly coherent movements like Imagism, however *dis*-unified they really were, are often taught and discussed in tidy narratives about how new poets came to be popular and influential rather than how these poets were culturally involved actors who were also susceptible to the reality of publishers, printers, and the reading public.<sup>13</sup> Lately, Recent work influenced by the “new modernist studies” has looked more deeply into the stories and texts that shaped poetry at the time, revealing the importance of cultural associations and institutions. The scholar of modernist poetry and textual studies George Bornstein reminds us that “the past, of course, pertains not only to an actual past, but to a knowable

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the entry for “Imagism” in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* calls Imagism a “short-lived but influential movement in English and American poetry that flourished during the years 1912 to 1917” (Garipey 259). Though roughly accurate, the coherence of the movement as a movement is assumed rather than explored, and the point that poets are influenced by other factors than the movement itself is elided. Hugh Kenner offers a more robust, though dated, history of Imagism. More recently, Helen Carr has published an equally expansive volume that explores rather than expounds. Both books offer rich biographical histories that begin to show how convoluted early modernism and Imagism were.

past, which is to say our construction of the past” (“Zion” 1). Oftentimes, as literary history has shown us, the past we thought we knew was only a construction—or a façade—of the actual past. As such, exposing complicated personal communities and layered impulses for publishing books enhances our present construction of the second decade of the twentieth century. In particular, New Verse anthologies and the stories that go with them must be amongst the materials we use to construct our view of the past. Because of the way anthologies are selected, constructed, and circulated, this kind of careful study of poetry anthologies shows more about particular groups, their theories about the new poetry, and the cultural biases they held than a similar study of little magazines would.

The scholars that do mention poetry anthologies often mention them only in passing instead of studying them carefully and in context, and when an anthology is studied individually, one or two articles seem sufficient to fill the void in scholarship. For example, Lowell’s *Some Imagist Poets* and Monroe’s *The New Poetry* each have only one full-length article devoted to them, whereas Kreymborg’s *Others* anthologies have none at all. Jayne Marek’s “Amy Lowell, *Some Imagist Poets*, and the Context of the New Poetry” (2004) examines the influence of Lowell and her anthology by outlining its history from start to finish. Marek’s overarching purpose is to reclaim Lowell’s importance as a publicist of early modernism and a forerunner of contemporary poetry. Marek writes, “Lowell’s various publishing-related activities established the place imagism now holds in the modernist literary canon. More important, Lowell was instrumental in fostering the flowering of literary modernism that occurred after the war and the knowledgeable reception of poetic innovation that continues to this day” (165).

While I agree with Marek when she posits the importance of Lowell to American literary modernism, there is much more to be said about how Lowell's nuanced personal history in Boston society affected the conception, production, and reception of her anthologies and poetry. In particular, Lowell's anthologies show how she tried to acclimate the denizens of Boston high culture to Imagism, a more specific claim than that Lowell's work matters.

Craig Abbott helpfully chronicles the history and impact of Harriet Monroe's *The New Poetry: An Anthology*. His 1984 article provides evidence of the significance of poetry anthologies, namely that "*Poetry* itself, however, never reached, directly, a great audience... Yet the anthology, more successful than *Poetry*, reached Monroe's great audience" (89-90). Abbott also shows how Monroe's anthology "packaged the poetic renaissance for public consumption, especially in the schools" (90), a point that is evident in the organization and reception of the collection. The rest of the article recounts Monroe's discussions with her editor, her theories of editorial selection, and the changes in the 1923 and 1932 editions. Abbott's article indicates the importance of the anthologies, but he does not address how the cultural undercurrent in Chicago specifically situated Monroe's collection.<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Kreymborg's *Others* anthologies have not been addressed on their own. In *The Little Magazine Others and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry*, however, Suzanne Churchill does mention the anthologies in order to provide context for her study of the little magazine *Others*. Churchill first mentions the anthology

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<sup>14</sup> One other article spends time on *The New Poetry*: Daniel Göske's 2000 article from *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies* (Korte).

to show that the magazine was losing money and that the publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, “alleviated the financial crisis” by agreeing to print the anthologies (52). In referring to the financial crisis, Churchill gestures toward the fact that anthologies are more easily commoditized, are sold for profit, and reach wider audiences, whereas little magazines are almost defined by financial struggle.<sup>15</sup> Later, Churchill usefully references the three *Others* anthologies to show how the poems came off differently in the anthologies than in the magazine. She shows how the anthology version of Marianne Moore’s “Dock Rats,” for example, allows “long, Whitmanesque lines [to] spill into five-line, free-verse paragraphs” (142). This is just one way anthologies allow different opportunities and impose different constraints than magazines.

Expanding upon present research, I examine Lowell’s, Kreymborg’s, and Monroe’s anthologies in their respective contexts to show the different ways the new poetry was dispersed and to show that the editors’ methods were vastly different. In fact, it turns out that these figures and their ideas are fundamentally at odds with each other. And it is precisely these boundaries and intersections that Bonnie Kime Scott prioritizes when she uses her phrase the “network of modernism”:

As an alternative to hierarchical accounts that seek to proclaim who “makes” a literary movement, or what genius’s poetry deserves to sit at the top, feminist scholarship, in collaboration with cultural studies, delights in tracing networks and connections, some of which traverse the categories and boundaries previously used to conceptualize modernist literature, and indeed a large array of cultural formations. One way of characterizing an author or promoter of modernism is to analyze the

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<sup>15</sup> When Kreymborg began focusing on editing the anthologies, his health and the health of the magazine were in peril. Kreymborg allowed guest editors to take the helm while he “ventured into book publishing”; “thus after its first year, *Others* entered a volatile phase that would continue until the end of its run” (Churchill 53).

specific array of intellectual and personal connections they maintained.  
How do these connect or refigure gender, race, or class? (137-38)

By emphasizing these personal connections, literary regions inform and change the way we interpret race, gender, and class in these books that were published in the 1910s. Scott continues by asking, “What genres, geographies, and occupations are involved?” This is the kind of question that helps reveal underlying cultural trends, and to her question I add others: what cultural positions are important to the dissemination of modernist poetry? What roles do the editor and New Verse anthology play in literary culture? How do Lowell’s, Kreymborg’s, and Monroe’s interactions with people and institutions in their regions change the way we read their anthologies?

Finally, the way we read these anthologies needs to be situated in the larger history of literature and the flux of literary centers in the United States. In *Writers in Retrospect* (2006), Claudia Stokes provides late nineteenth-century background that undergirds the discussions of literary regions that comprise this chapter. Her book examines the way literary histories were written and what they said about literary, academic, and elite culture. In particular, she writes about the literary historian Barrett Wendell and his *Literary History of America* (1900), a text he uses to point to Boston as “the source of what is best in America” (qtd. in Stokes 146). Stokes argues that Barrett is addressing the decline of New England as the literary center of the U.S. and that by the end of the nineteenth century “New York had become the nation’s literary capital” (146). Wendell’s defense of Boston comes from a literary connection to the past, a past that Brander Matthews wrote about in his history, *An Introduction to the Study of American Literature* (1896): “English literature is the record of the thoughts and feelings and the

acts of the great English-speaking race. This record extends a long way back into the past. ...Greek literature is dead, Hebrew literature is dead; but English literature is alive now” (qtd. in Stokes 47). For Matthews, the greatness of English literature is directly tied to the great literature of the past, and the “English-speaking race” is directly connected to the ancient cultures of Western civilization.<sup>16</sup> Both Wendell’s and Matthews’s histories and the rhetoric they employ show the changing ideals in literature, book publishing, and lifestyle before and after the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

Wendell’s and Matthews’s observations indicate the importance of class and race at the time—especially as the terms reveal entrenched perceptions of human identity and literary achievement. And because the three anthologies discussed in this chapter all interact with the ideas of class and race in one way or another, it is helpful to remember that there are limits to the uses of these terms. The ways Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe draw upon the narratives of class and race in their respective anthologies reflect the cultural assumptions of the geographical regions and communities these editors came from. When poets like Lowell, Monroe, and Kreymborg think of “class” or “race,” it might be assumed that they believe similar things; however, their values become distinct

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<sup>16</sup> It should also be noted that the use and definition of the term “race” was in flux throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The definition of “race” in the 1828 edition of *Webster’s Dictionary* focuses on family lineage: “the lineage of a family...A race is the series of descendants indefinitely” (“Race”). The 1913 *Webster’s*, on the other hand, emphasizes human groups and breeding, even giving specific examples: “The descendants of a common ancestor; a family, tribe, people, or nation, believed or presumed to belong to the same stock; a lineage; a breed.” One “common classification” of race separates humans into “Caucasian,” “Mongolian,” “Ethiopian,” “American,” and “Malayan” (“Race”). I offer a more detailed discussion of race in the conclusion to this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Stokes also mentions William Dean Howells as encompassing a wide range of regions, a connection that illustrates Howells’ changing critical preferences and the change in literary centers that Barrett Wendell notes. Stokes writes, “Critics have long recognized Basil March [a recurring character in Howells’ work] as Howells’ fictional counterpart, his novelistic substitute: both men are Midwesterners who move east to pursue literary careers, make career sacrifices to support their families, and follow the same geographical trajectory from the Midwest to New York by way of Boston” (165).

when we look at how they edited their anthologies. Lowell and Monroe are more apt to use “race” in the way Matthews did in 1896—as referring to the latest generation of the Western heritage. Kreymborg may have thought about race similarly, but he does not appeal to the rhetoric of race in his poetry or his prose. As we will see, however, his editorial decisions show he was more open to different conceptions of race than Lowell and Monroe.

### **Amy Lowell, the Boston Athenæum, and Elite Culture**

In January 1915, Alice Corbin Henderson wrote a short notice in *Poetry* called “Our Contemporaries.” She was writing about William Stanley Braithwaite and his review of magazine verse for 1914 in the *Boston Transcript*. Henderson’s tone was sarcastic and vaguely contemptuous. Her piece begins with the text of a letter that was presumably obtained from a friend in Chicago. Henderson says the letter is from “a member of the older generation to a young relative in the west”:

I am so glad you like to see parts of the Saturday *Transcript*, and it will give me pleasure to send them to you. The editorials are usually bosh; but the paper reflects the tone and mode of thought of a certain part of Boston, and the thirty-six or forty-eight pages do what they can to guide and enlighten the Bostonian. Someone told me the other day of a “spook” who comes back daily to his old home to read *The Transcript*! (193)<sup>18</sup>

Henderson salutes the supernatural dedication of *Transcript* readers and sardonically credits “Mr. Braithwaite’s valiant attempt to effect a co-ordination of interest between poets and readers.” But she goes on to show how she “disagree[s] radically with his

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<sup>18</sup> The term “spook” certainly denotes “ghost” in this instance, especially in an old city like Boston. On the other hand, Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson knew William Braithwaite was African American and may have also noticed the racial epithet, though this denotation of “spook” does not seem to be at play in the sentence.

standards of selection” (194).<sup>19</sup> The editorial makes explicit the “tone and mode of thought of a certain part of Boston,” and begins to show the animosity between East and West. Henderson’s tone and concluding line—“Will the newspaper editors of the Middle West please copy?”—show just how much antipathy she (and perhaps the whole Midwest) had for William Stanley Braithwaite, his selections, and his connection with and promulgation of Boston culture. We find a similarly disdainful sentiment in T.S. Eliot’s poems, most explicitly “The Boston Evening Transcript” (“The readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript* / Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn”).<sup>20</sup> What was it about the literary community in Boston that so bothered Henderson and Eliot? What was it about the arts in Boston that was apparently so disgusting to critics residing elsewhere?

Amy Lowell was born into the culture that produced the *Boston Evening Transcript*,<sup>21</sup> and she used her status to further her literary ends. The Lowell name was easily recognized and sometimes scorned in Boston. Jack Morgan illustrates the reputation of the Lowell name when he recounts a rhyme that treats Boston as “the home of the bean and the cod, / Where the Lowells talk only to the Cabots, / And the Cabots talk only to God.” Morgan remarks that “The lines speak to more than exclusiveness; they point to an unhealthy isolation as well” (105). The Lowells and the Cabots were the foremost representatives of a longer list of Boston Brahmins. Consequently, Amy

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<sup>19</sup> Henderson mostly bewailed the fact that *Poetry*, and the *Atlantic* even, were given short shrift in Braithwaite’s “review of magazine poetry for the year 1914” (193). Her biggest piece of evidence was the omission of Edgar Lee Masters’s *Spoon River Anthology*, which was first published in the St. Louis *Mirror*.

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that this is not a unique move for Eliot; he wrote other poems critical of Boston: “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “Portrait of a Lady” portray Boston society as hollow and alienating. And there are still others—“Cousin Nancy,” “Aunt Helen,” and “Mr. Apollinax” to name a few.

<sup>21</sup> The *Transcript* began in 1860 and was well established by the time Lowell was born in 1874.



Lowell's activity as a poet, editor, and patron of the arts can only be understood within the framework of this culture and the wider perception of her name—both because her character cannot be read outside her history but also because she was highly attuned to how her name was received in Boston society. Jayne Marek points out that

Lowell was acutely aware of the kinds of public comment that she herself attracted as the cigar-smoking, independent scion of the redoubtable Lowell line. She managed to use her personal attributes and the mythology of “being a Lowell” as leverage in order to re-create her public image as dramatic poet and knowledgeable critic. She reconfigured herself even as she pushed for acceptance of the new poetry. (163)

Although Lowell worked hard to recreate her persona, this reconfiguration was made within and because of the Boston community.<sup>22</sup> Her persona and poetry would reach readers internationally, but she was inexorably connected to Boston. Lowell's assumptions about poetry and America, too, grew up from her roots in her hometown.

Lowell's activity in and on behalf of the Boston Athenæum is an example of her strong commitment to Boston culture and the ideas it valued. The well-known private library, located a block away from the Massachusetts State House on Beacon Street, was established in 1807 (in part, by Lowell's great-great grandfather) and required an annual fee for membership.<sup>23</sup> The present-day Boston Athenæum claims the library “was the unchallenged center of intellectual life in Boston, and by 1851 had become one of the largest libraries in the United States” (“History”). Until mid-century, the available opportunities for citizens to borrow books in a library setting were scarce: borrowing was

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<sup>22</sup> Melissa Bradshaw mentions Lowell's estate and the kind of people she entertained there: “Legends of Sevenels, Lowell's castle/fortress, proliferated during her lifetime because she brought the right people there: journalists, editors, academics, composers, musicians, stage celebrities, and other poets—adversaries as well as allies” (18).

<sup>23</sup> A literary society known as the Anthology Club was established in 1804 by William Emerson and frequented by Charles Russell Lowell, Sr. The Anthology Club founded the Boston Athenæum in 1807 and published a short-lived journal called the *Monthly Anthology*.

a privilege of the elite. It wasn't until 1848, when the Boston Public Library was established, that ordinary citizens could enjoy a free library. And even then, the Boston Public Library had its own way of using architectural features to segregate privileged library patrons from common women and men.<sup>24</sup> Significantly, Lowell was personally involved with the politics of the private Boston Athenæum and not the Boston Public Library. When there was discussion of moving the Boston Athenæum to a new location, she wrote a narrative poem called "The Boston Athenæum" as part of a community effort to keep the library in its Beacon Street location.<sup>25</sup> The Boston Athenæum and Lowell's involvement with it reveal her place in a society with strong beliefs about social class and how privilege ought to be enjoyed.<sup>26</sup>

Lowell's poem "The Boston Athenæum" makes her cultural associations and presuppositions clear, showing how library patrons believed reading was a cultured act for an elite group. The human act of navigating the architecture of the library suggests privileged separation; her speaker asks, "How often in some distant gallery, / Gained by a little painful stair" (2-3) will the patron "stoop in painful posture" to read the names of

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<sup>24</sup> Kenneth A. Breisch notes that "the dichotomy between the first and second floors of the building is significant. In the lower realm, middle and working-class patrons were entirely segregated from the circulating collection...while the more privileged readers in the research collection were allowed to sit among the books in a manner of a private gentleman's library or Athenæum" (77). Thanks to blogger Charlie the Desert Sailor for his post "Boston Public Library," which led me to Breisch's *Henry Hobson Richardson and the Small Public Library in America*.

<sup>25</sup> The poem was first published in a pamphlet for the Boston Athenæum and later came out in *Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* (1912). A keepsake edition was printed for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the library that is still available online (Jirka).

<sup>26</sup> S. Foster Damon records an instance of Lowell's relative ownership of the library: "On January 10 [1916], Miss Lowell went to the Boston Athenæum for some books about New England. As she came in person, instead of sending Mrs. Russell as usual, and as she arrived just before closing time and insisted on keeping the place open half an hour, her visit caused enough of a commotion to be recorded at some length in the Librarian's diary" (335).

books in the “most secluded room” (115-16)? The distant position of the secluded gallery enacts an architectural metaphor that displays social categories. To get to the distant gallery, the speaker must push through the common mob in “the halls and corridors where throng / The crowd of casual readers” who are known for their “careless grasp” and “transient interest” (115). For Lowell’s speaker, the library (and its literature) exists especially for the longsuffering, privileged class that has the culture to know what is good:

For this is ours! Every twist and turn  
Of every narrow stair is known and loved;  
Each nook and cranny is our very own;  
The dear, old, sleepy place is full of spells  
For us, by right of long inheritance.  
The building simply bodies forth a thought  
Peculiarly inherent to the race. (121)

In conflating building occupancy with the cultural ownership of a privileged race, Lowell claims the ideals of Western civilization for a very narrow class of literary people in Boston.<sup>27</sup> Lowell wanted her poetry—especially this poem—to be read by the elite and to be understood by and accepted into this hallowed lineage. The “casual reader” comes from a different class and does not understand the value of good literature.

In much the same way that the building characteristics of the Boston Athenæum show a hierarchy of readership, the bibliographic codes in Lowell’s *Some Imagist Poets* also supports this reading of Lowell and illustrates the elitism of Boston culture.

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<sup>27</sup> Lowell’s distinctions among classes are presumably indistinguishable from her comments about race. In other words, her use of the word “race” refers to a nation or people, and she is not here considering skin color. As I discuss in the conclusion of this chapter, her conception of race overlooks color and is always assumed rather than explicit.

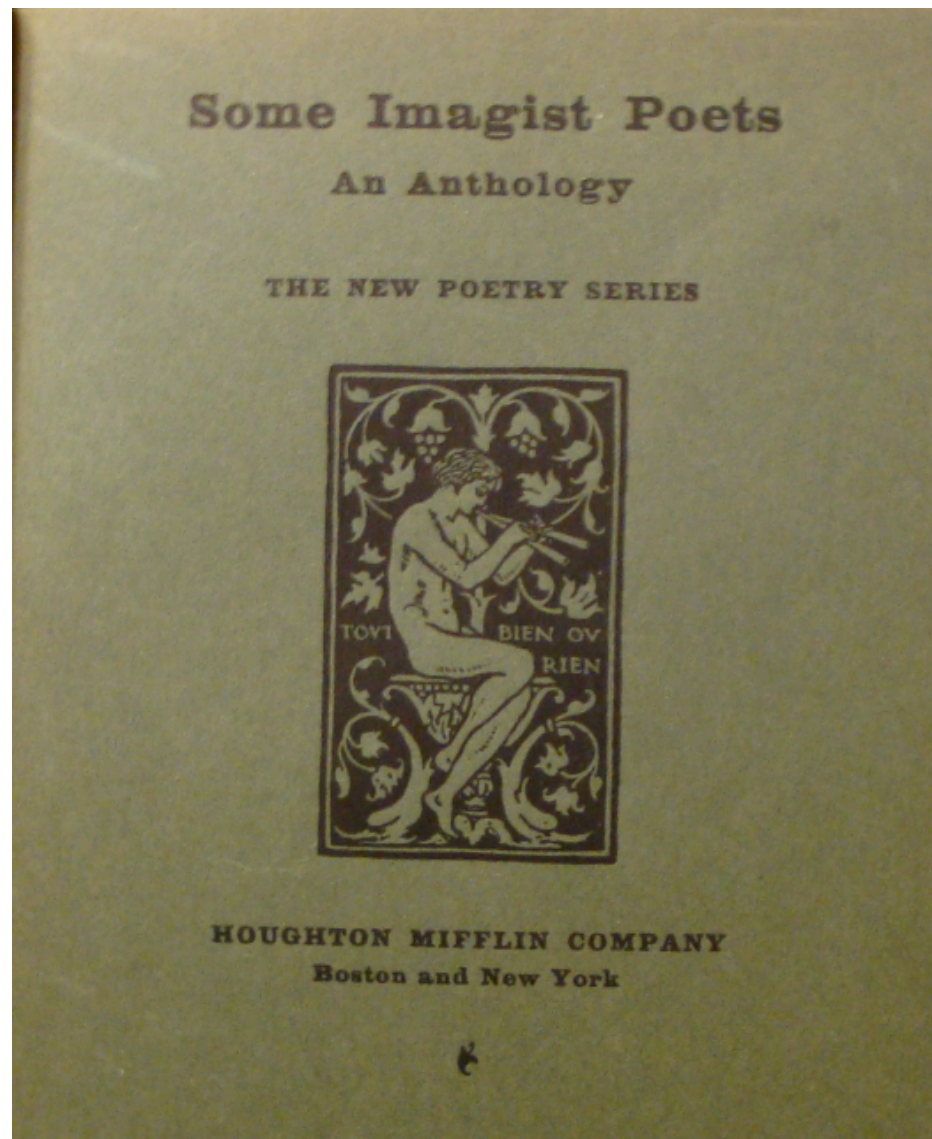


Figure 10. Lowell's copy of *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), Houghton Library, Harvard University, AC9 .L9517 .A915s 1915 (A).

The cover of *Some Imagist Poets* is a classic green with black text, and most of the copies were printed with paper covers (see Figure 10).<sup>28</sup> The Houghton publisher's device

<sup>28</sup> The copies I have seen have soft covers, excepting only Amy Lowell's copies at the Houghton Library at Harvard (call numbers: Lowell \*AC9 L9517 A915s (A) and Lowell \*AC9 L9517 A915s (B)). These copies have a distinct marble cover design called "half red morocco," suggesting they were specially bound for her in a limited run.

appears twice: on the cover and on the title page. The device presents the image of a boy playing the pipes (or *aulos*) and includes the French phrase “TOUT BIEN OU RIEN,” written in what look like Latin uncials. The classical lettering for a French phrase is a self-conscious, if trifling, gesture towards antiquity.<sup>29</sup> The device on the title page is smaller and does not include the French phrase; however, the image of the piper evokes a classical atmosphere reminiscent of the Boston Athenæum statuary (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. “Statuary gallery, Boston Athenæum,” New York Public Library, image ID: g90f370\_063f.

<sup>29</sup> The blogger Chumley outlines the evolution of Houghton’s device, and the earliest version were written in regular, lowercase letters. It wasn’t until the second decade of the twentieth century that this change was made on the device (Mackay).

The first floor of the Athenæum housed the statuary, and the competitive, athletic Greek character is foregrounded. However, this photograph also includes statues of more passive, introspective individuals (located roughly in the center of the image) who are sitting or reclining much like the pipe player on the Houghton publisher's device. This association with the statuary makes *Some Imagist Poets* itself seem like a private library, and all these material clues work together to position the anthology inside familiar territory for highbrow Bostonians.<sup>30</sup> Though Houghton marketed and sold the volume across the U.S. and overseas, the material construction of the book appeals first to Lowell's community in Boston.<sup>31</sup> Her material object validates the poetry it contains and creates an agreeable experience for elite readers in Boston.

And finally, the poetry itself speaks to those readers. The best example of this can be seen in Amy Lowell's selections for *Some Imagist Poets, 1916*. When choosing what self-authored poems to include, she chose three that welcome Boston readers into familiar territory, and these poems strongly reinforce the assumptions wealthy Bostonians had and show the strong affinities Lowell had with this culture. Lowell goes as far as to congratulate the rich for being rich, and while she pushes her readers to be more open minded about art, she firmly validates the life of the wealthy. She confirms class hierarchies and reveals Boston as her primary audience, even referencing a popular Boston concert hall in the third poem. Moreover, the order of these poems invites a

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<sup>30</sup>The title page also includes publisher information for Boston and New York and lists "The Riverside Press Cambridge." This piece of bibliographic information is printed in an Old English font and points to a very specific locale near Boston. Cambridge is, of course, the home of Harvard University and is less than four miles from Lowell's estate, Sevenels.

<sup>31</sup> Macmillan had published her *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds* the previous year but rejected the anthology from the beginning. Lowell went with Houghton Mifflin because she did not want to end up having to go with a small firm like the Bonis (Marek 156-57).

pleasing reading experience for elite Bostonians. “Patterns,” “Spring Day,” and “Stravinsky’s Three Pieces” show how Lowell wanted to present the anthology to people familiar with high-cultural institutions in Boston.

The first poem Lowell chose to include in the anthology was “Patterns,” a poem about war, cultural norms, and lost love. This poem was an easy choice because of the popularity it had already gained.<sup>32</sup> For instance, William Stanley Braithwaite deemed it “incomparable” (*Poetic Year* 294), and Mary Aldis wrote: “A masterpiece this poem, one to learn and repeat and make one’s own” (28). Although the poem was not first released in Boston, reprinting it in *Some Imagist Poets* does reveal at least two points that Lowell may have had in mind for Boston readers. First, in presenting a classic garden setting from the “Queen Anne period” in the eighteenth century (Damon 375), Lowell creates a setting her neighbors could relate to. Most, if not all, estates of the rich had gardens, and Amy Lowell was well known for hers.<sup>33</sup> Lowell also plays on this common experience with cultivated gardens when she used the phrase “pleasance of stone statues and mathematical parterres” as a metaphor for poetry in *Tendencies in American Poetry* (238). Second, “Patterns” encourages Bostonians to question the war that had begun a year before the first publication of the poem. In connecting love and war to general human patterns, the last line exclaims “Christ! What are patterns for?” (107), expressing skepticism of the war without challenging Bostonian cultural assumptions. The

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<sup>32</sup> This poem was first published in the *Little Review* in August 1915. Lowell thought it too lurid for Boston, so she sent it to the *Little Review* in Chicago where it was instantly accepted. Perhaps assuming Lowell wanted to publish her poetry in Boston first, Damon wrote that the poem “was a trifle risqué for the American public, so it was sent to the *Little Review*. Miss Anderson accepted it at once for the August number” (313).

<sup>33</sup> Lowell frequently posed for pictures in her garden. (See Damon 590 and 634. See also Munich and Bradshaw 168 and Bradshaw 28.)

popularity and strength of “Patterns” drew Boston readers into the anthology and prepared them to read the next two poems.

The next poem Lowell chose for *Some Imagist Poets, 1916* was “Spring Day,” whose subject such other modernists as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and William Carlos Williams wrote about memorably.<sup>34</sup> Lowell’s poem, however, is more predictable than those of her contemporaries, especially in its celebration of the warmth and color of spring.<sup>35</sup> Its underlying message about class and privilege is also surprisingly predictable: the poem congratulates the rich on their luxurious lifestyles and modern possessions. The poem allows readers to justify a trip to the city as a sensuous experience only to return to the safety of sprawling estates—like Lowell’s Sevenels—on the outskirts of town. Even so, reviewers and critics miss the fact that the poem not only reinforces class boundaries but actually encourages the rich to separate themselves from people living in the city.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ezra Pound wrote to William Carlos Williams in 1908: “Here is a list of facts on which I and 9,000,000 other poets have spied endlessly: 1. Spring is a pleasant season. The flowers, etc. etc. sprout, bloom etc. etc.” (*Selected Letters* 4). T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* presents a dismal view of spring, starting “April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain” (1-4). Williams wrote *Spring and All* after *The Waste Land* was published, and many critics see his “By the road to the contagious hospital” as a response to Eliot’s poem (see Bufithis and Lowney). Also, Williams’s poems “Spring Song” (about death) and “Spring Strains” (a poem vaguely violent towards birds) were published in *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse, 1917*.

<sup>35</sup> The poem was first published in the special Imagist number of the *Egoist* in May 1915, presumably because the prose poetry Lowell uses to create these scenes and colors was innovative.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Aldis’s review of *Some Imagist Poets, 1916* in the *Little Review* summarizes the poem without analyzing it, saying only that it is “scintillating” (28). Harriet Monroe’s review in *Poetry* points to “Spring Day” as a “too self-conscious experiment, which, however interesting, still retains signs of effort, [and] remains a study rather than a poem” (“Two Anthologies” 257). Monroe believes the form is interesting, if overwrought, but she does not consider the content of the poem. More recently, in 2004, Andrew Thacker argues that “Lowell’s corporeal engagement with the city, emphasizing the contact of feet upon the pavements, does not try to bemoan or contain the urban, but quietly celebrate[s] its powerful qualities” (111). However, any urban celebration in the poem is set up in contrast to the extravagant luxury of the wealthy, making the speaker’s human engagement with the city of second importance.



“Spring Day” breaks a single day into five sections (“Bath,” “Breakfast Table,” “Walk,” “Midday and Afternoon,” and “Night and Sleep”), and the day importantly begins and ends in luxurious domestic settings. The speaker begins with an enjoyable, sunlit bath: “I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me” (82). Bathing for personal enjoyment was a novelty of the rich,<sup>37</sup> and the rest of the poem continues glorifying the lush life of the wealthy. From the “breakfast table decked and white” to the bedroom “sheets of lavender,” the poem is full of details that assume a high-class economic position. There is no sense of urgency in the bath (“I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots”), and the breakfast table is lush (“Placid and peaceful the rolls of bread spread themselves in the sun to bask”). The city, by comparison, is chaotic and dirty (“Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock-still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw”), and we come to find out that only the marvel of modern machinery can break through the furor (“A motor car cuts a swath through the bright air, sharp-beaked, irresistible, shouting to the wind to make way”). Because the opulent images are so overpowering, a critic might be tempted to read this as an ironic poem about spring; however, a straightforward reading is preferable because the poem says nothing about how luxury should be tempered or eschewed. Finally, the poem ends in the evening, with the speaker voicing her desire to escape—“I leave the city with speed”—and to return to her “lavender sheets” and a night that is “fresh-washed and fair” (86). The poem practically begs upper class readers to bask in the glory of their lives, and

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<sup>37</sup> Even though cleanliness was an increasingly important cultural value, very few people could afford more than a washbasin, not the elaborate full bathtub described in the poem.

Lowell knew her Boston readers would easily relate to the poem when she included it in the anthology.

The final poem, “Stravinsky’s Three Pieces, ‘Grotesques’ For String Quartet,” rounds out Lowell’s selection of her own poetry in *Some Imagist Poets, 1916* and confirms that all three poems and the anthology were created for a very specific audience in Boston. These Boston readers regularly attended high cultural events like the opera and the symphony. In this case, the event was a performance of Stravinsky’s “Three Pieces for Quartet” by the famous Flonzaley Quartet at Jordan Hall in Boston on December 2, 1915. Though many of Lowell’s contemporaries in Boston may not have been ready for the creative “grotesques” they experienced at the concert, they certainly would have attended the performance and spent time discussing its uniqueness afterwards.<sup>38</sup> Lowell uses this poem to encourage her community to be more open-minded about art and music, but the encouragement does not ask them to think beyond the boundaries of elite society. In fact, the selection of these three poems hardly challenges the preconceptions Bostonians had about the lives they were living—the three poems congratulate them on their comfortable lives. If Lowell wanted to be critical of high society in Boston, she could have included lines like these from her poem “Dinner Party” of the same period:

They sat in a circle with their coffee-cups.  
One dropped in a lump of sugar,  
One stirred with a spoon.

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<sup>38</sup> Damon recounts the event: “Such sounds had never issued from strings before: there were bagpipes and drums and horns and rattling carts, and at the end a very dismal organ. The vitality and poignancy of the music, however, appealed instantly to Miss Lowell; by December 11, she was informing everybody that she had written one of her best poems about the ‘Three Pieces,’ or ‘Grotesques,’ and that no editor could ever understand the poem unless he also understood Stravinsky” (326). Also, Ambrose confirms the differing artistic views of Lowell’s contemporaries: “Amy Lowell’s musical tastes were definitely unconventional among her fellow Boston Brahmins, whose conservative preferences dominated the choice of repertory for such musical organizations as the Boston Symphony” (46).

I saw them as a circle of ghosts  
 Sipping blackness out of beautiful china,  
 And mildly protesting against my coarseness  
 In being alive. (340)

These lines from “Dinner Party” were first printed in *Men, Women and Ghosts* (1916) alongside “Spring Day” and “Stravinsky’s Three Pieces, ‘Grotesques’ For String Quartet.” If she had put this critical poem in the anthology, Boston readers would have thought she was being starkly critical of their society, a message Lowell is clearly trying to avoid. She chose to omit the poem, however, and we can conclude that Lowell wanted to use her formidable celebrity to create an anthology that validated rather than questioned the views of elite readers in Boston. The ordering of the poems she selected invites readers, like so many party guests, to increasingly partake in the elite Boston society that Lowell loved and lived her whole life within.

### **Alfred Kreymborg, New York Bookshops, and Commodity Culture**

In 1922 Guido Bruno published *Adventures in American Bookshops, Antique Stores and Auction Rooms*.<sup>39</sup> The short book is a compilation of articles Bruno had published elsewhere since 1916, with titles like “The Romance of Buying and Selling New Things,” “Auctions as Amusement Places,” “Autograph Brokers,” “New York Book Shops,” and “Way Down in Greenwich Village.” The articles describe an energetic culture of salesmanship, with goods changing hands at a rapid pace. Everything was a commodity (from antique furniture to underwear), and Bruno believed “the wanderings” of “old

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<sup>39</sup> Guido Bruno was a recognizable part of Greenwich Village society. Alfred Kreymborg called Bruno a “Bohemian sensation-monger” (*Troubadour* 211). Though Bruno’s reputation might have been questionable to some, Kreymborg believed he was one of the “pioneers of the village” (209). He is also known for the various small publications he edited: *Bruno’s Weekly*, *Bruno’s Bohemia*, *Greenwich Magazine*, and *Bruno Chap Book* among others.

objects” “are eternal” (11). But the excitement centers more on the act of exploration than on the objects or money that trades hands. Bruno writes, “Not money but the game of hunting after the unexpected, and the thrill in finding it, constitute the lure that attracts the seeker after old things” (12). Within this broader context, Bruno examines the sale of books in New York. He describes one bookman: “I know one man who is ‘picking up’ a living by looking through the book-stalls of dealers and buying odd volumes for small amounts of money and selling the same books to rare-books dealers for as many dollars as he pays cents” (23). And in spite of the fact that many of these salesmen are “highly educated” and “unusually gifted,” Bruno believes they “prefer the free life of buying and selling” (23) to traditional vocations. New York was a thriving center for the sale of books in the U.S.,<sup>40</sup> and this commodity culture made it possible for books—and the shops they were sold in—to transmit new ideas, lifestyles, and literary movements.

The bookshops themselves are mini-ecosystems, catering to and supporting different groups of artists, readers, and business people. Bruno writes about thirteen New York bookshops in his chapter “New York Bookshops,” which was originally published in 1918. He begins: “Every city has its book streets. Book shops are gregarious, and they grow like mushrooms in groups” (39). The accepted and popular “book streets” change over time,<sup>41</sup> and from 1914-1918, Bruno believed Fourth Avenue had “come to honors

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<sup>40</sup> Bruno called Frank Bender “one of the leading second-hand book dealers of Fourth Avenue, and that means of the United States” (44-45).

<sup>41</sup> Bruno describes the adaptability of bookselling families: “The grandfather had been prominent on Ann Street, the son on Fourth Avenue, and the grandson flourishes on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth” (39).

again” (39).<sup>42</sup> Bruno also compares the community of booksellers to mushrooms because there is “little competition” amongst them, and in places like Greenwich Village, different bookshops had reputations for having specialties distinct from their “neighbor’s collection” (39). This phenomenon encouraged patrons (and the booksellers themselves) to “browse about” the collections of various bookstores to find the books that suited them best. In this way, certain bookstores came to be firmly associated with specific literary movements.<sup>43</sup>

Washington Square Bookshop is one such place, and the best way to introduce the feel of the bookstore is to mention its close neighbor Washington Square Park, a piece of land that in many ways encapsulates the values of literary modernism. James Freeman and Linda Pocock argue that the eight-acre plot has always provided “a unique physical and symbolic environment for the condensing and highlighting of values that run counter to the prevailing cultural norm” (120). Freeman and Pocock’s cultural description of the park mirrors the Washington Square Bookshop itself. Founded in 1912 by Albert and Charles Boni, the bookshop had three owners and two locations throughout the decade, but it was always a gathering place for members of the avant-garde.<sup>44</sup> Its first location was on MacDougall Street, across from the southwest corner of Washington Square

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<sup>42</sup> Fourth Avenue was known as “Booksellers Row” (62) and is a phrase that is still used. Marvin Mondlin and Roy Meador wrote *Book Row: An Anecdotal and Pictorial History of the Antiquarian Book Trade*, which spends little time examining the 1910s and favors mid-century bookshops.

<sup>43</sup> Kristen Hogan writes about this phenomenon in terms of what she calls the “feminist shelf.” It “articulate[s] a new way of reading women’s texts through recognition of their contexts in interdisciplinary feminist literatures collected on the shelves of feminist bookstores” (ix). Borrowing her idea of the literary “shelf,” I believe bookstores that housed modernist poetry shape the way we think about not only the content of the books they sold but also about the plans and marketing strategies of publishers and editors.

<sup>44</sup> Kreymborg loved the Washington Square Bookshop. He wrote in *Troubadour*: “The first haunt Krimmie called at was the Washington Square Bookshop on MacDougall Street” (208), and “of all the [Greenwich Village] haunts, however, Krimmie returned most frequently to the Boni Bookshop” (210).

Park.<sup>45</sup> Robert Sarlós notes that by 1916 “the social focus [of Greenwich Village] had recently shifted from lower Fifth Avenue to MacDougal Street just south of Washington Square” (63). In late 1916, Frank Shay bought the bookshop and moved it north three or four blocks to 17 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>46</sup> And to solidify its avant-garde reputation, the bookstore is best known for housing the controversial sale of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in later issues of the *Little Review*, an episode that took place after Egmont Arens purchased the shop in 1918.<sup>47</sup>

The rapid exchange of ideas in places like the Washington Square Bookshop was metonymically associated with the commodities (like antiques and underwear) being exchanged at a rapid pace on the streets of New York. This reality contextualizes Alfred Kreymborg’s creations, namely the magazine *Others* and his three *Others* anthologies. Early critics of the New York literary scene, like Barrett Wendell, did not think that this fast-paced commodity culture was conducive to creating good literature. For Wendell, the very fact that literary objects were so easily bought and sold denigrated their worth. He argues, “If you have things to sell, there [in New York] you can find most buyers...so if you are an artist you have things to that you would impart to other men, there you can surely find the greatest number of men to whom they may be imparted” (qtd. in Stokes 154). Wendell, Stokes suggests, believed that “the enormity of the New York markets makes literary quality control futile” (154). While early critics like Wendell thought the

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<sup>45</sup> The original building on MacDougal Street was slated for destruction in 2008 and has since been razed (Hamilton).

<sup>46</sup> Shay printed the last edition of *Des Imagistes: an anthology* from this location in 1917.

<sup>47</sup> Albert Parry recounts the story: “In 1918, the *Little Review* of the Village was seized by the authorities, issue after issue, because Margaret Anderson dared to publish James Joyce’s *Ulysses*” (313).

commodity culture cheapened the literature being sold, it actually strengthened the diversity of ideas that could be communicated in a work of art. And because Kreymborg and many of the poets he selected for his anthologies lived and worked in Greenwich Village, his anthologies capture the bohemian lifestyle in ways that *Some Imagist Poets* and *The New Poetry* could not. Further, the bohemian culture defended itself (sometimes against reason) because it *was* bohemian culture,<sup>48</sup> and Kreymborg's editorial tendencies reflect this truism. This passion for otherness, the energy of New York, and the allure of being in the center of American literary production situate Kreymborg's *Others* anthologies as innovative, experimental, and forward-looking.

In the spring of 1915, after having printed Ezra Pound's *Des Imagistes* a year before in the *Glebe* (Feb. 1914) and subsequently relinquishing control of the magazine to Alfred and Charles Boni in New York,<sup>49</sup> Kreymborg was preparing the first issue of his next project, the little magazine *Others*. The first issue came out in July, and many Greenwich Village regulars were present in the first volume (July-Dec. 1915). Suzanne Churchill lists the wide range of individuals and ideologies that were printed in the magazine: "The little magazine brought together anarchist, communist, and socialist writers such as Lola Ridge, Adolf Wolff, and Carl Sandburg; avant-garde artists such as

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<sup>48</sup> Hutchins Hapgood wrote: "Let me make the simple statement...that I merely defend and exalt what is generally condemned; that I do this irrespective of the merits of the case, and simply in order to defend the extremely small minority, just because it is the minority, irrespective of whether the minority is right or wrong; that I attack the powerful and prevailing thing, in art, industry, in all fields, just because it is prevailing, irrespective of the merits of the case; that my formula is a simple and false one which I apply and reapply with mechanical and monotonous precision" (qtd. in Watson 135).

<sup>49</sup> The last two issues of the *Glebe* were published in October and November 1914, each publishing a translated play by Frank Wedekind (*Erdgeist* and *Pandora's Box*, respectively). As Churchill explains: "Kreymborg says he abandoned the *Glebe* when the Bonis pressured him to publish European translations: he would not compromise his commitment to American artistic products" (35).

Mina Loy, Man Ray, and Marsden Hartley; and popular poets such as Sherwood Anderson, Louise Bogan, Vachel Lindsay, and even Robert Frost” (7). The fluidity and contingency of the avant-garde poets paired with the popular poets shows that Kreymborg wanted to pair the poetry of Greenwich Village inhabitants with poems by more established poets. The magazine used the popular poets to help give new ideas like free verse and bohemian lifestyles an audience.

The values associated with the magazine *Others* carried over to Kreymborg’s *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse*, the first of which was published in March 1916. Kreymborg used the anthologies to push avant-garde poetry even more than he did in the magazine, even though they could easily be seen as very similar publications. Both the magazine and the anthologies use the slogan “The old expressions are with us always, and there are always others.” When the slogan is printed in the magazine, the phrase seems to mean that the poems themselves were “other”—new poetic expressions (in form and content)—and also that the poets themselves were new and different. The phrase can be extended to Greenwich Village life: the community will “always” have a storied past, but new people and new ideas are “always” sure to arrive. But even as the slogan mirrors modern lifestyles in Greenwich Village, the epigraph takes on new meaning in the anthologies: it highlights the selective nature of an anthology, reminding readers that there were many poets and poems that could have been selected but were not. Many well-known poets who were printed in the magazine did not make it into the anthology. The anthologies foreground what is most other by giving the most poems and pages to Kreymborg, Moore, Stevens, and Williams; the anthologies contain the poems that are most in line with the values of poetic experimentation. Though Amy Lowell and Harriet



Monroe were both included in the first volume of the magazine (August and December 1915, respectively) neither poet was chosen for the anthologies, showing that their work was in a different category.<sup>50</sup> The distinct meanings of the slogan and Kreymborg's selections make the anthologies stronger representatives of the values of *Others* than the magazine.

Kreymborg's publisher for the anthologies also emphasizes the overriding idea of "otherness." Sometime during the fall of 1915, when Kreymborg was in financial trouble, the young publisher Alfred A. Knopf approached him.<sup>51</sup> Having had little success, Knopf wanted to expand his reach, and the controversial *Others* magazine presented an opportunity to harness fresh talent.<sup>52</sup> Kreymborg remembers, "This young man, Alfred A. Knopf, was so keenly attracted by the *Others* movement, he asked the editor to collate an annual anthology of poems to be issued under the sign of the Borzoi, and Krimmie found the publisher so sensitive to modern movements that he accepted" (265). The two men worked together, and on March 15, 1916, *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse* resulted. The influence of Knopf at the early stages of the publication of the *Others*

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<sup>50</sup> Kreymborg's interaction with Amy Lowell confirms this disconnect. He sent a letter to Lowell to introduce his new magazine project and ask for her support. Damon recounts the exchange: "Presently Miss Lowell received a letter from Alfred Kreymborg, erstwhile editor of the *Glebe*, asking her for poems for a new magazine, *Others*, to begin in July. ...She sent poems, a cheque, and her book" (Damon 309). Though Lowell's first reaction was supportive, just two months later she was questioning the values of Kreymborg's ideas. In a letter to Richard Aldington in June, she wrote "Apparently all the questionable and pornographic poets are trying to sail under the name [of free verse] just now" (qtd. in Churchill 46).

<sup>51</sup> In 1914, at the age of twenty-two, Knopf had founded his own publishing company and had published eight Russian, Polish, and French authors by the end of 1915 (and later Ezra Pound too). Knopf had worked with Doubleday and later Mitchell Kennerly before setting out on his own.

<sup>52</sup> Knopf's first ad in *Publisher's Weekly* came out in September 1915 and showcases the Russian literature he was publishing with minimal success. The *Dictionary of Literary Bibliography* (DLB) lists his first authors as Gorgol, Garshin, Andreyev, Gorky, and Kropotkin. Przybyszewski's novel *Homo Sapiens* was withdrawn for sexual content in December 1915. And in April 1916, William Henry Hudson's *Green Mansions* became the "first popular success for the young publishing house" (Henderson and Oram 13).

anthologies shows how the relationship between a small publisher and an editor from Greenwich Village could be mutually beneficial (perhaps pushing each other to publish books they would not publish on their own). When Knopf first approached Kreymborg, he was looking for literature that would make his company a success, and Kreymborg was struggling to get his magazine to press each month. They needed each other.

The bibliographical trappings of the *Others* anthologies combine the cultural realities present in Kreymborg's Greenwich Village life and in Knopf's Borzoi books. Take the 1916 edition as an example. The dynamic font and font color on the cover, the epigraph before the title page, and the title page itself say a great deal about the audience and cultural moment into which these books were released. The font of "OTHERS" is a fluid bubble lettering with three waves drawn through, and though the subtitle "An Anthology of Verse" is much harder to read, it too is printed in its own unique font (see image below). In a time when typeface makers were modernizing traditional nineteenth-century fonts, Knopf chose this conspicuous and exotic font over modern simplicity.<sup>53</sup> The shiny gold color of the font (or dark orange in some editions) vividly stands out from the brown boards it is printed on.<sup>54</sup> The sum effect of this approach privileges the word "OTHERS" over anything else, and this word would be the first thing a bookstore

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<sup>53</sup> David Consuegra's *American Type Design and Designers* (2004) includes a detailed chronology of the changes in typefaces over time. It shows how exotic, primitive fonts like Rudolf Koch's Neuland became popular in the 1920s. The first two decades of the century are better typified by modern versions of nineteenth-century fonts. The renovation of the Bookman typeface into Bartlett Oldstyle in 1901 is an example of this common phenomenon.

<sup>54</sup> Northwestern University's Special Collections' second copy, a gift of Lambert H. Ennis, Associate Professor of English, is in superb condition. There are a few pencil marks in this volume. The first copy has a clipping of a photograph of Kreymborg pasted on the title page. Both copies have the AAK (Alfred A. Knopf) logo on the back cover, while the orange-on-brown copy does not. The 1917 copy is in good condition and is inscribed by "Clara Shangfelt, February 1919." (Call numbers for the two 1916 copies: 20th Cent Am K92o. Call number for the 1917 copy: 20th Cent Am K92o 1917.)

customer would see. The printing is not typical and communicates a distinct sense of newness. The 1917 edition of *Others: An Anthology of New Verse* answers to the same basic description, though it is more brightly colored than the drab brown of the first volume (see Figure 12). The orange boards of the 1917 edition have the same title on the cover, though this time in blue writing.<sup>55</sup> The covers of the 1916 and 1917 editions combine the values of Borzoi books, the Washington Square Bookshop, and the openness of the free verse movement.

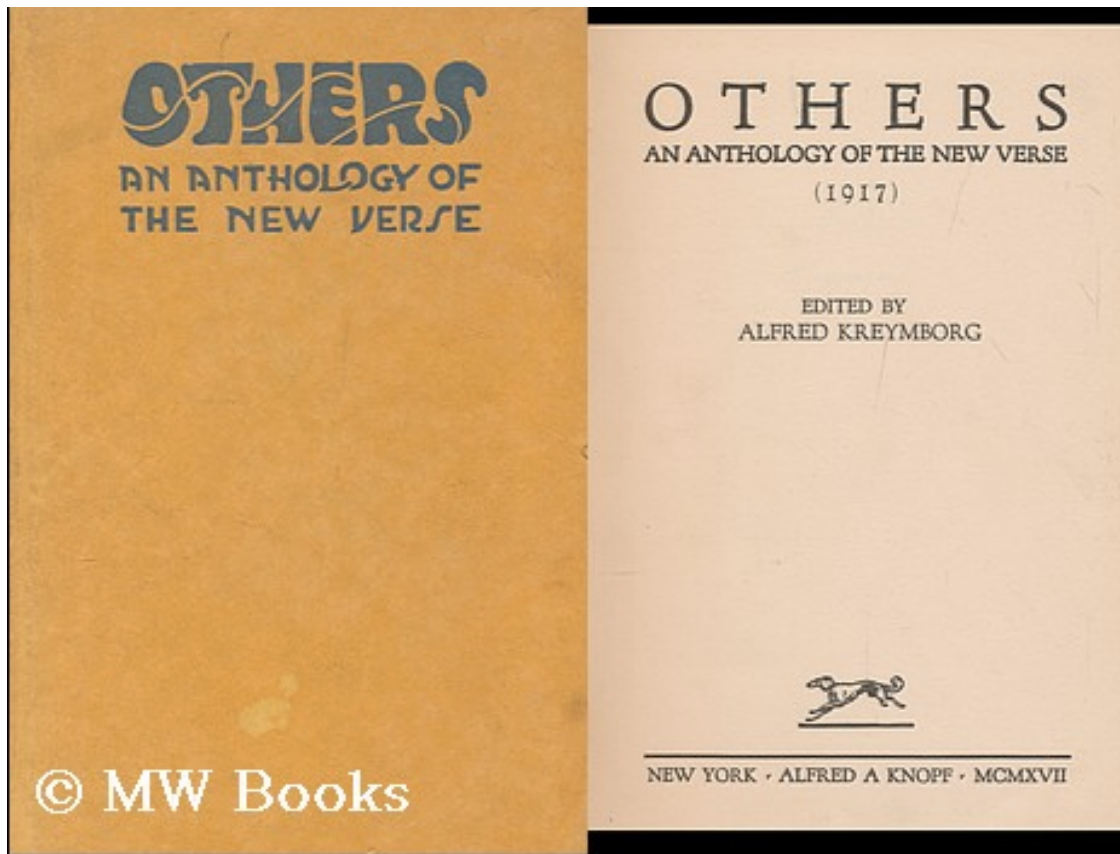


Figure 12. Alfred Kreymborg's *Others: An Anthology of the New Verse* (1917), MW Books, [mwbooks.ie/mwbooksire/166352.jpg](http://mwbooks.ie/mwbooksire/166352.jpg).

<sup>55</sup> Orange was a color associated with the Boni Bookstore and Alfred A. Knopf. The very first editions of *Des Imagistes* were printed in a very similar orange. (See chapter 1.)

When Willa Cather first signed with Knopf, she “was convinced that [Knopf] had set out to do something unusual and individual in publishing” (“Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.”). Cather had seen that Knopf’s books communicated the newness, excitement, and youthfulness present in New York at the time. This is especially fascinating because Amy Lowell and Harriet Monroe created anthologies that sought to communicate stability and respectability—ideas that are not priorities for Kreymborg or Knopf.

The poetry that Kreymborg chose to foreground in the 1916 and 1917 anthologies reveals how innovative and experimental he thought the best new poetry should be, and his decisions about when and how to publish significant poems seems to make the anthology look more to the future than the past. The first two anthologies are very similar in purpose and production, so much so that the third *Others* anthology, which was published in 1920, does not belong in the present discussion.<sup>56</sup> All the poems in the 1916 edition were first printed in the little magazine *Others*, while some of the poems in the 1917 edition were selected from other journals printed that year.<sup>57</sup> The “Contents” lists of the 1916 and 1917 anthologies include roughly the same number of poets and are of

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<sup>56</sup> The third anthology came out after a period of three years had elapsed and was more of a final summation of the legacy of *Others* than a continuation of the values and ideas present in the first two anthologies. Kreymborg’s first two anthologies were innovative, experimental, and forward-looking—ideas that were not present in the last anthology. Kreymborg even called it a “valedictory” publication and a “farewell”: “This farewell was simply the collection of one more *Others* anthology—the third and last—and still another publisher, Donald Evans’ friend, Nicholas L. Brown, undertook the burden of printing and distributing it” (339). The book itself looks completely different than the first two, including 190 pages and 26 poets; the purpose of the volume was therefore very broad. Significantly, the original epigraph (“There are always others...”) is missing, further separating this final volume from the earlier collections and especially from the magazine. Harriet Monroe’s long review in the Dec. 1920 *Poetry* confirms this: “The general effect of the book is much less radical, less experimental, than the previous *Others* anthologies; and the material presented is naturally less new than when the magazine was a haven for the wildest orgies of proud-spirited youth” (150).

<sup>57</sup> The editor’s note after the “Contents” list in the 1917 edition mentions eleven journals Kreymborg drew from, including the *Egoist*, the *Little Review*, *Poetry*, and *Blast*.

about the same length, but, over the course of the two volumes, Kreymborg foregrounds one poet more than any other. Of all the poets published in the 1916 and 1917 anthologies, Wallace Stevens received the most space across the two books, with twenty poems over seventeen pages.<sup>58</sup> Kreymborg saw Stevens as a selling point for the anthology and apparently considered Stevens the flagship poet of the anthologies if not of the magazine.<sup>59</sup> When co-creator Walter Arensburg said, “We’ll have Wallace Stevens and Mina Loy to begin with,” Kreymborg responded, “They alone would create the paper we have in mind” (*Troubadour* 221).<sup>60</sup> And Hart Crane wrote in 1919, “[Stevens] is a man whose work makes most the rest of us quail” (“Wallace Stevens”). This means a lot coming from Crane, who is well-known for being a difficult poet; some have said Stevens’s “extreme technical and thematic complexity” make him, for many, “a willfully difficult poet” (“Wallace Stevens: 1879-1955”). This complexity coupled with the unique subjects of his poems perhaps make Stevens the most experimental poet in the anthologies, and his poems changed the writing of poetry in much the same way that Kreymborg’s anthologies would change the production of New Verse anthologies.

The *Others* anthology for 1916 included nine poems by Stevens, and their publication history exemplifies the unique and innovative feel of the anthology. The first

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<sup>58</sup> Williams Carlos Williams and Kreymborg himself were almost as prominent (Williams: 17 poems, 20 pages; Kreymborg: 18 poems, 15 pages), but Stevens’s best early poems appeared in *Others*, which seem to make him headline the anthologies. A search of *Others* on the Modernist Journals Project confirms, however, that Williams was more prominent in the magazine than Stevens.

<sup>59</sup> Though much that has been written focuses on the little magazine *Others*, the only critic to spend significant time on Stevens in a discussion of *Others* is John Timberman Newcomb, who “instigated the turn in scholarly assessments of the magazine” (qtd. in Churchill, “An Introduction”).

<sup>60</sup> Loy was not foregrounded in the anthologies as much as Stevens. (Loy only had 4 poems and 11 pages). Loy is foregrounded more in the magazine; this is why Churchill spends an entire chapter on her role in the magazine.

two poems, “Peter Quince at the Clavier” and “The Silver Plough-Boy,” were first published in the second issue of *Others: A Magazine of the New Verse* (Aug. 1915). As such, these two poems mark Kreymborg’s introduction of Wallace Stevens to the readers of *Others*.<sup>61</sup> For Kreymborg, these poems were the hallmark of innovation and experimentation, and Stevens’s poems show how Kreymborg valued poetry that revealed where poetry writing was going rather than where it had been. In short, Kreymborg wanted the newest, most revolutionary poems. The other seven Stevens poems printed in the 1916 anthology also have an important publication history; they all appeared in the March 1916 issue of *Others*.<sup>62</sup> The first *Others* anthology also came out in March, further emphasizing Stevens’s poems. No other poet in the March 1916 issue of *Others* had as many poems as the seven Kreymborg published from Stevens; as such, Stevens headlined both the anthology and the magazine in the same month.

The 1917 *Others* anthology includes eleven poems by Stevens, and Kreymborg’s editorial selections are conspicuous for two reasons. First, four of the poems Kreymborg chose for the anthology (“Valley Candle,” “Gray Room,” “The Wind Shifts,” and “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”) had not yet been printed in the magazine or in any other journal. Kreymborg had new poems from Stevens and decided that the best place to publish them was in the *Others* anthology for 1917, which came out in

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<sup>61</sup> Stevens’s first published poem was “Cy est Pourtraicte Madame Ste Ursule et les Unze Mille Vierges” in *Rogue* magazine in March 1915 (Crunden 412).

<sup>62</sup> “Six Significant Landscapes,” “The Florist Wears Knee-Breeches,” “Tattoo,” “Song,” “Inscription for a Monument,” “Bowl,” and “Domination of Black.”

October—a full two months earlier than their printing in the magazine in December.<sup>63</sup>

Kreymborg knew the poems were important, and he wanted to use them in the anthology first because he knew they would add novelty and punch to the collection. The four poems fit the bill because Kreymborg had already established Stevens's reputation in the 1916 anthology. The 1917 anthology, like most anthologies, highlighted the past, but only the recent past. Kreymborg's second anthology, like Stevens's poetry, was a forerunner of what was to come, both in the coming months in the pages of the magazine *Others* and in the future of modern poetry in general. Second, the "Contents" list also shows that Kreymborg was purposeful about how he wanted to foreground these four poems, because they are not listed chronologically by publication but by Kreymborg's own organization. He put "Valley Candle," "Gray Room," and "The Wind Shifts" in the middle of the ten Stevens poems selected for the anthology but chose to save "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" for last.<sup>64</sup> Kreymborg thus foregrounds "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" over against the other three poems and reveals his editorial prescience. This poem of course came to be one of Stevens's best known.

Many of Kreymborg's selections are still critical and even popular successes, and his fellow editors and reviewers noticed that his editorial methods were unique. A *Poetry* reviewer named Max Michelson called Kreymborg's work "pioneer editing" (155), and it is obvious that Kreymborg had internalized some of Pound's editorial techniques from

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<sup>63</sup> As far as I can tell, there is no precedent for any other poet's work being published in the 1917 anthology before it was published in the magazine. In all of my study of anthologies, I can think of no other examples of anthologies being the first place a poem was published.

<sup>64</sup> As I established in chapter 1, putting the poem last in the list for Stevens's poems adds significance to "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."

*Des Imagistes*. Like Pound's collection, Kreymborg's *Others* anthologies are significant because they take what is usually a stuffy and respectable form and fill it with surprises and brand-new poetry. His collections are part of the fast-paced social scene in New York, and the content of the anthologies mirror the outward reality of urban commodity culture. This culture is exhibited in poems like Sandburg's "Street Window," which opens up the world of the pawn shop and its "keepsake" commodities (102), and Arthur Davison Ficke's "The Dancer," where even the act of dancing, which creates "madness, and oblivion, a fierce white peace" costs only a "nickel" (39). Kreymborg's editing has an innovative flare traditional anthologies lack. He took the exciting, fast-paced culture of New York and dropped it into his anthologies—making Lowell's and Monroe's anthologies seem traditional and old-fashioned.

### **Harriet Monroe, the Art Institute, and Cultural Recognition**

The federal government granted the privilege of hosting the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition to Chicago in September of 1890, and, as plans began, city officials started to consider how they wanted to present the city to the world. Chicago was at a stage in its development where officials wanted to show off the progress that had taken place since the Chicago fire of 1871. Officials discussed the details, not least of which was where the fair would be located; they chose, after much deliberation, to fill the marshes and build between the east border of the city and Lake Michigan. And as the plans were formulated, one of the most prominent buildings created for the fair was the Art Institute.<sup>65</sup> As such, the Art Institute is a symbol of the success of the arts, not only for the

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<sup>65</sup> The building was used for the World's Congress during the exposition and given over to the Art Institute after the fair. This plan worked well for the Art Institute because it had already outgrown its first building,



U.S. and the Fair, but also as an acknowledgement of Chicago as a global leader in the arts. The significance of the building only increased in the twenty years after the exposition, culminating in a second showing of the Armory Show in March 1913.<sup>66</sup> The overriding narrative of these twenty years was Chicago's desire for recognition. The 1893 Expo, the exhibitions at the Art Institute, Burnham's city planning initiatives—they all signaled Chicago's desire to be seen as a world-class city.<sup>67</sup> But the world was unsure. When “distinguished architects...from New York, Boston, [and] Kansas City” were invited to Chicago to help plan the World's Columbian Exposition, they showed “apathy” toward the “great opportunity for artistic collaboration—for the East still expected Chicago's Fair to be a ‘cattle show’” (Monroe *A Poet's Life* 112-13). Chicago had to try to prove itself and gain recognition from the skeptics in the East.

The desire for civic recognition was the overriding theme of not only the Columbian Exposition but also Harriet Monroe's life work: *Poetry* magazine and her influential anthology, *The New Poetry*.<sup>68</sup> Chicagoans no longer lived in the western wilderness; instead, Chicago was doing its best to be a cosmopolitan city, both culturally

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constructed by John Wellborn Root and Daniel Burnham in 1885. These same men were given oversight of the architectural plans for the whole exposition and chose to build the Art Institute for the Expo in 1892.

<sup>66</sup> Its most famous exhibits in the interim were Monet and Manet in 1895, then Gustave Doré in 1896, Jean-François Raffaëlli in 1899, and the “Eight” in 1908 (Maxon 14).

<sup>67</sup> Chicago had been in planning stages since the 1880s. Carol Krinsky writes, “The ‘White City’ was not a real city and it did not last very long. However, it inspired a good deal of civic construction, being itself a culmination of the energetic building activity that was taking place between the 1880s and the publication of the Chicago Plan in 1909” (221).

<sup>68</sup> The anthology came out in three editions: 1917, 1923, and 1932. This chapter focuses on the first anthology and does not attempt to look at the later editions in order to make comparisons amongst Lowell's and Kreymborg's anthologies of the same time. For helpful surveys of all three editions, see Abbott and Goske.

and artistically.<sup>69</sup> Monroe noticed early on that poetry was missing from the plans of the Columbian Exposition:

I still knew some of the architects, also certain painters and sculptors who were receiving commissions; and prominent citizens of my acquaintance were serving gratis on various committees. The arts, backed by all the money in the world, seemed to be conspiring together for a gala season of beauty, and hope was riding high to a triumph. The arts?—all the arts but one, for although music was to have a grand summer program under Theodore Thomas, poetry was omitted from all the plans. (116)

Monroe did not stand idly by; instead she asked to be commissioned. “I went one morning in March, 1891, with my plea: would the Committee on Ceremonies recognize the neglected art of poetry by decreeing a poem for the Dedication, and would they ask me to write it?” (117). Her request was approved, and eventually her “Columbian Ode” was delivered at the commissioning of the whole exposition in October 1892. This episode begins Harriet Monroe’s saga as an advocate of poetry in Chicago. The story of the “Ode” and her connection to the Art Institute communicate her role as a member of established society in Chicago—a member who celebrated and revitalized poetry in Chicago and beyond.

The lead-up to the performance of the “Ode” and its quality as a piece of poetry are secondary to the layered narrative of a poet seeking to make her poem and its occasion important and noteworthy.<sup>70</sup> Monroe only somewhat subtly makes the Midwest

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<sup>69</sup> In June 1893, Mary P. Abbot wrote, “Chicago writers have not been willing to be behind hand when their city was so rapidly pushing to the front. Material progress is not enough; even the only materially progressive see this” (35).

<sup>70</sup> Ann Massa describes its reception and legacy this way: “Although the poem was published in full in the official history of the Fair, only two sections, totaling twenty-eight lines, were authorized for performance, lines emphasizing the role of America as the custodian of ‘The Spirit of Freedom’ and ‘the purpose of God.’ [...] After such a palaver the poem would have had to be extraordinarily good not to be anti-climactic; it was not good at all. If Harriet had not consistently anthologized the poem it is doubtful if even the historical interest of association of the World’s Fair and with her own role in shaping American poetry

legendary—and by extension, Chicago. Her frequent references to the “prairie” or the “plains” in the poem signify the location of the exposition and the appropriateness of Chicago as a location for an international event. Monroe purposefully privileges the wilderness over classical images to make Chicago a “triumph” on the prairie: “I was determined to use no classical images—Columbia was crowned not with laurel, but with ‘dewey flowers / Plucked from wide prairies and from mighty hills,’” and she moved through “vast virgin spaces toward the splendors and triumphs of modern civilization and an era of universal peace” (120-21). It is almost as if Columbia traveled through time and across the “virgin spaces” of the Midwest to find Chicago and, consequently, the apex of civilization. All the while, the poem highlights the implicit need to find recognition for Midwestern culture:

The low prairies that lie abloom  
Sigh out to the summer air:  
Shall our dark soil be the tomb  
Of the flowers that rise so fair?  
Shall we yield to man’s disdain,  
And nourish his golden grain? (14)

In answering these questions, the poem shouts for artistic recognition: “Columbia, my country, dost thou hear? / Ah! dost thou hear the songs unheard of Time? / Hark! for their passion trembles at thine ear. / Hush! for thy soul must heed their call sublime” (20). Even with all this fervency, Monroe had to work hard to make the poem worthy of memory—she asked for it to be commissioned, argued for it to be read at the event, sued an Eastern newspaper for using the poem without permission, and reprinted it repeatedly. Monroe labored tirelessly until the poem was itself an institution. Before *Poetry* began in

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would have been sufficient to preserve the Ode’s accessibility” (59). Even with her low estimate of the poem, Massa admits, “the Ode was, in fact, the most significant literary event of the fair” (59).

1912, the poem was her only well-known accomplishment, and both the content and the cultural narrative are a testament to her propensity to construct monuments, especially monuments that made much of Chicago.

If the “Columbian Ode” shows the beginning of Monroe’s work to make Chicago and the new poetry prominent, then her personal relationship to and work for the Art Institute show how Monroe wanted *Poetry* and *The New Poetry* to play similar cultural roles as the Art Institute. Monroe credits the builder John Welborn Root (her brother-in-law) for building the first Art Institute and thereby “transform[ing] the prairie city into a great metropolis in the years following the Great Fire” (447).<sup>71</sup> Later, Monroe regularly reviewed the Art Institute’s exhibitions for the *Chicago Tribune*. Perhaps most notably, she was present in New York for the original Amory Show in February 1913 (the headline ran: “Art Show Open to Freaks”), and she reviewed the show again in March when significant parts of it came to the Art Institute (5). In spite of the title of the first review, Monroe was, not surprisingly, sympathetic to the show, saying “Most American exhibitions are dominated by the conservatives. Not so this one; the radicals are in control, and there are new voices in the chorus...thus it is fortunate that Chicago is to see a part of the exhibition.” This review was written during the first six months of *Poetry*, and Monroe’s exuberance for art was high and her tone idealistic:

Sunday is a day for sermons, and the art column is a proper place to preach in now and then...But great or little, [the artist] must follow his particular goddess—ah, what a shy, shivering, flitting, vanishing phantom she is at first!—he must follow her and never lose sight of her or abandon her, no matter how rough a wilderness she leads him through...sackcloth

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<sup>71</sup> Root died in 1891, before the Exposition, and Monroe wrote *John Wellborn Root: A Study of His Life and Work* in 1896. In Monroe’s autobiography, she practically gives Root the credit for the “skyscraper era” (*A Poet’s Life* 110).

and ashes, fasting and prayer, long years in the wilderness—these are a necessary discipline for certain souls. But few are strong enough to accept it. (“International Art Show”)

Monroe’s artistic zeal is obvious, and she is at least subconsciously speaking about herself as a poet and editor of poetry. The process leading up to beginning *Poetry* included “long years in the wilderness,” and Monroe’s goal was to make her magazine great like the Art Institute, creating a museum-like space for poetry.

Monroe makes the connection between the Art Institute and her work as an editor explicit in an editorial comment called “Then and Now” (Dec. 1916). She writes, “And through the clamor of politics sounds the call of the arts: the Art Institute opens new galleries—much more spacious than our magazine-gallery for poets—in which hundreds of painters and sculptors, from Maine to Oregon, speak for beauty with still voices, stretch out invisible hands appealing for recognition” (142). Following this metaphor, *Poetry* can be described as a small gallery, an independent, hole-in-the-wall gallery that a nascent group of artists might frequent. But Monroe wanted poetry to be recognized on a bigger scale; she wanted poetry to be recognized in the same way that the public recognized the art that was displayed in the Art Institute. *Poetry* did not have the ability to publish a large group of poets, but her anthology *The New Poetry* brought Monroe closer to being able to reach out to the “invisible hands appealing for recognition” and to create a wide anthology-gallery for poets that would come to be displayed before a large audience and to be remembered in a lasting way.

But who would be included in this “gallery,” and who would be given the most prominent position in the “exhibition?” The bibliographic codes in *The New Poetry* answer these questions and confirm that Monroe’s anthology—though very catholic in

nature—still implicitly advocates for Chicago and poets closely connected with *Poetry*. The title page conspicuously designates Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson as “editors of *Poetry*,” a move that strongly evokes a connection to Chicago, especially to well-informed readers. This is a vital connection because, by 1917, Monroe had been credited by many for introducing Imagism to the public.<sup>72</sup> The title page also subtly points to Chicago as an international center for artistic production because the MacMillan publisher’s device lists subsidiaries in cities as far ranging as San Francisco and Bombay (see Figure 13 below). Though some other books published by MacMillan in 1917 carried the same publisher’s device, the effect of printing this device and the list of affiliate cities suggests not only the international reach of MacMillan as a company but also that readers in these cities would see Chicago as an influencer of poetry across the globe.



Figure 13. Macmillan Co. publisher’s device, *The New Poetry* (1917), Google eBook.

<sup>72</sup> Amy Lowell acknowledges Monroe explicitly in *Some Imagist Poets 1916*: “To *Poetry* belongs the credit of having introduced Imagism to the world: it seems fitting, therefore, that the authors should record their thanks in this place for the constant interest and encouragement shown by its editor, Harriet Monroe.”

These bibliographic details show Monroe's tireless work as an editor in Chicago and begin to reveal the ways in which Chicago was coming to be seen as a world leader in the arts.

The most convincing evidence that *The New Poetry* was meant to showcase the arts in Chicago, however, is the fact that the most prominent poets in the volume either had a strong connection to *Poetry* or hailed from the Midwest. If the table of contents can be likened to the great halls of the Art Institute, then *The New Poetry* has many smaller "rooms" that show prominent artists, but the biggest exhibition "halls" in the anthology present the work of Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Monroe herself.<sup>73</sup> Because it was a large volume and reading cover-to-cover would be virtually impossible, readers would have had to scan the "Table of Contents" to choose poets and poems to read.<sup>74</sup> Of these four poets, Pound and Sandburg are especially prominent because their selections take up nearly a full page in the contents list. Pound was an early visionary, foreign correspondent, and former contributor to *Poetry*, so Monroe would have been especially careful in choosing which of Pound's poems to include. She chose to begin with Δωρῖα (the only poem in the book with a Greek title). This poem was also foregrounded by Pound himself in *Des Imagistes*; he used it as the first and most prominent of his six self-authored poems. In choosing this poem and placing it the way she did, Monroe not only acknowledges the importance of her former colleague to the

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<sup>73</sup> Each of these poets had at least 12 poems and 11 pages in the volume: Masters (21 poems, 15 pages), Monroe (12 poems, 12 pages), Pound (20 poems, 19 pages), and Sandburg (18 poems, 11 pages).

<sup>74</sup> The physical dimensions of the book are similar to those of both *Some Imagist Poets* and the *Others Anthology*, but it was significantly longer. Monroe's collection had 404 pages. This is 300 pages longer than Lowell's and 250 pages longer than Kreymborg's first collection.

magazine but also gives a nod to *Des Imagistes* as a forerunner to her collection.

Monroe also prioritizes the selection of Sandburg's list of poems by including his famous "Chicago" poem first, a strategy Monroe herself surely conceived.<sup>75</sup> Also, she included "The Harbor" directly after "Chicago," extending the reader's journey into the world of the city; the last lines implicitly compare the freedom and promise of "a storm of gulls" to Chicago: "I came sudden, at the city's edge, / On a blue burst of lake" with "Masses of great gray wings / And flying white bellies / Veering and wheeling free in the open" (13). From these two examples from Pound's and Sandburg's poems, not to mention the featuring of Masters and herself,<sup>76</sup> Monroe "wrote" Chicago into *The New Poetry* through her editorial choices.

In the next twenty or thirty years, *The New Poetry* was easily more popular than *Some Imagist Poets* or the *Others Anthology*. Monroe's selections and decisions about organization and layout have a lot to do with this success. Monroe's *The New Poetry* is a historical catalog that offers the widest group of poets available, but her collection does not advertise new movements (like Lowell's) or question established conventions (like Kreymborg's). In his review of the anthology in the *Egoist*, T.S. Eliot said that Monroe's approach "obscures rather than exploits the distinct technical triumphs of certain poets." Even so, Eliot saw value in what Monroe had achieved: "An anthology of contemporary verse...ought not to contain many good poems, but a few; and it ought to embalm a great many bad poems (but bad in a significant way) which would otherwise perish"

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<sup>75</sup> The order of Sandburg's poems was different from his first appearance in *Poetry* (March 1914) and his 1916 book, *Chicago Poems*.

<sup>76</sup> Monroe includes excerpts from Master's *Spoon River Anthology*, which is loosely based on the actual Spoon River in Illinois, a point that firmly connects his work to the Midwest. Monroe's selections of her own work are uncharacteristically personal, and many of them take the American West as their subject.



(“Reflections” 151). Monroe did just that. *The New Poetry* became a literary museum, and much like the Art Institute, it offered a variety of “artifacts” for almost everyone to enjoy. She erased the small movements that changed twentieth-century poetry, but this erasure made her volume the most popular of any New Verse anthology during her lifetime. In the end, *The New Poetry* was a significant part of Monroe’s life’s work, and it is inarguably a lasting monument to the early twentieth-century poetry that made Chicago an important region for American poetry.

### **New Verse Anthologies, Race, and the Future**

No one doubts that different geographic regions in the United States have different reputations, and the experiences and assumptions about race in these regions can be wildly divergent. Boston, New York, and Chicago are all above the Mason-Dixon line, but each city has its own identity when it comes to attitudes toward race. The regional backgrounds of Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe affect their writing as poets and their choices as editors of anthologies. The acts of selection and arrangement give poems and subjects a new voice. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis says of white poets who portray black subjects, New Verse Anthology editors “inhabit” the poets and poems they choose for their collections (123). Comparing the extent to which Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe inhabit their selections uncovers the ways they and their respective cultures thought about race. Lowell’s *Some Imagist Poets* avoids making race an issue and, instead, introduces the new work of relatively established poets to an elite audience in Boston, carrying on a conversation about Imagism that was, in large part, started by *Des Imagistes*. Using a different approach, Monroe’s *The New Poetry* collects a whole range of “new” poetry

that presents numerous portrayals of race that border on racism.<sup>77</sup> The *Others* anthologies, on the other hand, select dynamic poets and poetry to upset cultural norms, and Kreymborg is the first editor to explicitly raise the subject of race in a way that questions the cultural beliefs of the day. The decisions of each editor and the differing success of these anthologies reveal the connection between the dominant culture and people's assumptions about race in each region.

Because anthologies are composed of individual selections, the methods these editors used for including and excluding poems are instructive, especially as they relate to race. The selection process Lowell went through strictly limited the kinds of poets who might be included, leaving only the same six poets for each anthology. Though Lowell does discuss the "democratic" nature of the collection, she is referring to the freedom each poet had to include whatever poems he or she wanted.<sup>78</sup> The idea of excluding a poet based on race surely did not occur to her during the editing process: she had settled on six poets, all of whom happened to be white, from the beginning.<sup>79</sup> Lowell's decisions make *Some Imagist Poets* the most elite and independent of these New Verse anthologies.

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<sup>77</sup> Monroe's view of what was "new" says little about race but it is worth noting that she included seven poets who began publishing in the early to mid-1890s (Alice Meynell, Agnes Lee, Thomas Hardy, Hamline Garland, Ernest Rhys, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and Monroe herself.) Craig Abbott makes a helpful distinction on this point; he argues that Monroe originally wanted poetry that was "new in kind" but had to acquiesce to her editor, who wanted poetry that was "new in time," the latter allowing for a larger group of poets to choose from ("Publishing" 92). The title itself—*The New Poetry*—bespeaks a kind of extreme openness, especially when compared to the "some" in *Some Imagist Poets*.

<sup>78</sup> The "some" in *Some Imagist Poets* certainly designates the collections as intentionally selective. Lowell tries to emphasize the "democratic" nature of the books, but this designation is not entirely accurate, even for the six poets involved. Marek points out: "The preface mentions a mutual editorial committee and states that the poets had 'absolute freedom' to choose their own selections, a misrepresentation of their critical exchanges that suggests democratic agreement" (159).

<sup>79</sup> She did, however, exclude Ford Maddox Hueffer's poem "On Heaven" from the first *Some Imagist Poets* on account of the poem's subject matter and his difficulty in cooperating with Lowell. He was never asked back (Marek 156-57).

Her collections were created for a very small audience of educated white people, much like Lowell's neighbors in Boston. Monroe's collection is democratic in a different way: she included a wide swath of poets, many of whom were suggested by her editor.<sup>80</sup> For Monroe, "democratic" meant trying to include the poetry she and her editor thought was simply good enough to be memorialized. This approach included some poems about race, but instead of questioning common assumptions the poems relied on stereotypes. Kreymborg's approach could not have been more different. Living in Greenwich Village, he knew the most controversial and forward-thinking artists, and his method of selection was very, very open—a practice that started in his magazine.<sup>81</sup> Because he chose the best poems from the magazine, his anthologies were much more discriminating than the magazine, making poems about race that much more conspicuous and meaningful. While Lowell overlooked race in *Some Imagist Poets*, Monroe's presentation of race in *The New Poetry* merely reflected current prejudices. Kreymborg, however, sought race out as an issue and confronted readers with questions rather than stereotypes. Even if he was far from being a race activist, his anthology moved in directions no other New Verse anthology had done before.

Very few poems in any of the anthologies discuss race directly, but obvious clues to each editor's tendencies arise under close inspection. Racial terms can be found in all three anthologies, and the context of their use is often surprising. When words like

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<sup>80</sup> Her list of poets first numbered 50 but ended up at 101, with many of the poets who were added being earlier MacMillan poets (Abbott "Publishing" 95).

<sup>81</sup> His selections were open to the point of allowing imaginary poets to publish a whole issue of *Others*. Churchill writes about the Spectric School that was featured in *Others* for January 1916: "*Others* was remarkably non-discriminatory—occasionally to a fault. The magazine was so open to experiment that unsuspecting editors devoted an entire issue to the "Spectric School," a literary hoax concocted by three of their own contributors." She continues, *Others* "blurr[ed] the boundary between poets and pretenders" (7).

“nigger,” “black,” “dark,” “brown,” “red,” and “yellow” are used to refer to people, the racial assumptions of specific poets and the respective editor who selected them begin to show themselves.<sup>82</sup> *Some Imagist Poets* and the *Others* anthologies have very few examples of these racial terms being used to refer to people, but *The New Poetry* has a number of obvious and jarring references.<sup>83</sup> It could be argued that Monroe’s open editorial policy would make it hard to keep offensive ideas out of her anthology, but even though her editor wanted certain poets to be included, she was still able to choose which poems found their way into the collection. This is especially true with poems that were written close to the time *The New Poetry* was published, because earlier poems could have been chosen instead.<sup>84</sup> Much can be surmised from selections, but their outside writings also show how Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe had different ideas about how to represent people from different races in poetry. Taking their selections and writings

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<sup>82</sup> Poetry from *Some Imagist Poets*, 1915 mentions a “black throng,” “black hair,” “dark mouth,” and “green and red portraits of King Francobollo” (an apparently made up king, as “francobollo” means stamp in Italian). *Some Imagist Poets*, 1917 includes “brown backs,” “red-stained faces,” and “dark” faces. The *Others* anthology for 1916 has “black figure,” “eyes, wild dark” and “Negro.” The *Others* anthology for 1917 includes “black minute men.” *The New Poetry* has sixteen such references compared to the eleven listed above for all the *Some Imagist Poets* and *Others* anthologies combined. Of these sixteen, I will mention two here (and two later in the text). Wilfrid Wilson Gibson’s “Color” presents “A blue-black Nubian plucking oranges” in order to exoticize the man “among the shadowy memories / that haunt me” (120). The man exists only for the speaker’s pleasure: “He lives forever in my eyes’ delight / bizarre, superb in young immortal might — / A god of old barbaric mysteries” (120). The other example is Alice Corbin’s “One City Only,” which describes the waterfront of the speaker’s city with its “tidal smell,” the “smell of mud,” and the “brown bare toes of small negroes / with the mud oozing between them” (56). The African-American children are made to be part of the landscape and are later contrasted with white normalcy when the poet repeatedly uses the term “them” to describe the children.

<sup>83</sup> The references are “jarring” to a twenty-first century reader. George W. Stocking reminds us: “The first thing I would argue is that it is not entirely appropriate to approach this issue by a direct application of the categories we are accustomed to in the present. For us, the significance of race is expressed in such polarities as racist and egalitarian, heredity and environment, liberal and conservative. However, problems arise when one approaches late nineteenth-century evolutionary racial thought in these terms” (14).

<sup>84</sup> For example, Alice Corbin’s “One City Only” (with its “brown bare toes of small negroes”) was first published in *Poetry* in January 1916, but her poetry had been printed in the magazine since it began in 1912.

into account, Lowell and Monroe share many of the same predilections, while Kreymborg's unconventional ideas cause him to presciently make race an issue.

What did these editors believe about race, and how did it inform their selections? First, by living in the United States, all three editors were at least exposed to many of the same ideas about race. George W. Stocking's work gives us an idea of what those ideas looked like after the turn of the twentieth century: "there was a generally accepted correlation between color and civilization. Savages were...dark. Barbarians were red or brown. Yellow-skinned peoples had an ambiguous status, but they were often viewed as at best semicivilized. Civilized men had white skins, and only white-skinned men were fully civilized" (14). Americans, by and large, believed that skin color (biology) determined essential characteristics for groups of people and that these groups made up races. In the 1920s, this idea was challenged by the work of Franz Boas and Melville Herskovits. Christopher Douglas describes Zora Neale Hurston's work for Boas and Herskovits during the mid-'20s. One job "she was doing in 1926 was work that these two white anthropologists could likely not have performed: Hurston was stationed on a Harlem street corner, measuring with calipers the heads of Harlemites as they passed by" (Douglas 11). In fact, Hurston "was part of the paradigm shift from racial anthropology to cultural anthropology. In the spring of 1926, her caliper exercises in Harlem were part of the work refuting racial thinking, for which Herskovits" gave her credit in his 1928 and 1930 studies on the "American Negro" (21). Because this change in the way people thought about race did not begin to take hold until the late 1920s, Lowell, Kreymborg, and Monroe would likely have shared the ideas of the majority of white Americans who believed in a kind of racial anthropology.

The poetry Lowell wrote and the poetry Monroe included in *The New Poetry* shows that they were comfortable with the prevailing beliefs about other races. As such, Lowell and Monroe are similar because they use the word “race” in ways that assume whites were part of a superior racial lineage. This belief would have gone hand-in-hand with the reality that “the idea of race was in many ways and for many people not very different from what we would call today national character” (Stocking 6). For them, national character assumed the United States was white and implicitly disregarded other races. As such, when Lowell and Monroe use the word “race,” they don’t necessarily mean “white people,” though this is certainly assumed. Instead, when they use the word, they are referring to a set of beliefs and attitudes that have their lineage deep in Western civilization. In other words, they use the word “race” to refer more to national origins of thought rather than biological categories. When Lowell’s speaker exclaims “For this is ours! ... by right of long inheritance,” she means she and elite Boston culture have laid claim to a Western heritage that is “peculiarly inherent to the race” (“The Boston Athenaeum” 121). For Lowell, no other race was reasonably capable of laying hold of this “inheritance.” Elite Bostonians were not interested in sharing their cultural luxuries; this is why, as Melissa Bradshaw points out, Lowell wanted to keep “in place the social and racial hierarchies that so richly benefited her family” (63). Similarly, when Monroe uses the word “race” in *Poetry*—“I sometimes think the race will be saved through love of nature, saved at last from the collective rapacity of greed and the collective violence of war” (“To the Wilderness” 260)—she means the lineage of Western thought and ideals from ages past. Lowell and Monroe are not thinking in terms of white and black; they are, instead, assuming without comment the whiteness of the Western legacy and ideal.

The way that Lowell and Monroe portray people of color in their poetry therefore becomes more of an exhibition of how many Americans thought about race than a calculated affront to people of other races. Because Lowell avoids the issue of race in all three *Some Imagist Poets* anthologies, we must go to Monroe's *The New Poetry* to find Lowell's poems on the subject. Monroe chose to include Lowell's long, two-part poem "1777." The first section of this poem, "The Trumpet-Vine Arbor," describes a cultured woman sitting in her garden thinking about the fact that a late Revolutionary War battle is occurring just out of earshot. The second part of the poem, "The City of Falling Leaves," presents the speaker giving orders to a servant boy and preparing to dress for a dinner party in an unnamed town in Italy. The contrast between the two sections interestingly highlights the speaker's separation from the war and national strife. In presenting an antebellum scene, Lowell has the opportunity to make ethical judgments about slavery but instead chooses to present the scene without comment. The poem therefore exemplifies the otherness of non-white races and conflates a servant with a yellow satin dress:

The little black slave with the yellow satin turban  
Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.  
His yellow turban and black skin  
Are gorgeous—barbaric.  
The yellow satin dress with its silver flashings  
Lies on a chair,  
Besides a black mantle and a black mask.  
Yellow and black,  
Gorgeous—barbaric. (188)

Lowell's poem objectifies a black figure in direct and open terms and does so in a way that is meant to seem commonplace. The slave, the clothing on the chair, and the mask are all described as "gorgeous—barbaric," and Lowell uses the phrase to describe other

yellow and black objects: “yellow sunlight and black shadows,” “yellow of satin...black mantles,” and a dress “compassed about with darkness” (189). The speaker in the poem has agency, while the slave is nothing more than a dark-hued object.

Monroe also chose to include a number of other poems in her anthology that speak about race in similar ways. The most famous such poem is Vachel Lindsay’s “The Congo (A Study of the Negro Race),” with its “black bucks” and frequent references to primitivist ideas about African Americans.<sup>85</sup> There are other poems that make similar references,<sup>86</sup> but perhaps the most striking is Florence Wilkinson’s “Our Lady of Idleness,” which refers to “dark bunchy women” of the working class (363). The representation of skin color, in whatever form, is by and large negative in Monroe’s *The New Poetry*. This is not to say that Monroe and the poets she anthologized were consciously racist, but it does show the kind of ingrained assumptions that were common at the time. Lowell’s and Monroe’s cultures allowed them to speak of race in terms that either erase or objectify people of color, and in this way, their anthologies are an indication of the beliefs already present in American culture.

Alfred Kreymborg’s *Others* anthologies are different, in that they begin to break down the perceptions of race and culture Lowell and Monroe assumed. One of the most dynamic developments of the *Others* anthologies is Kreymborg’s inclusion of Wallace Stevens and his ideas about blackness. Kreymborg chose poems from Stevens that raised

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<sup>85</sup> Lindsay’s poem is characteristic of the race poetry that was popular at the time. Its triple subtitular use of the word “their” (“Their Basic Savagery,” “Their Irrepressible High Spirits,” “The Hope of Their Religion”) makes blacks the mysterious other who have essentially different cultural connections and human characteristics.

<sup>86</sup> The most provocative are John Gould Fletcher’s “Chinese Nightingale,” Alice Corbin’s “One City Only,” and Wilfrid Wilson Gibson’s “Color.”



questions about race, and Kreymborg published those poems in ways that evoked questions rather than made statements. Kreymborg prioritized Stevens's poetry so much that we can see Kreymborg "inhabiting" Stevens's poems and the questions he was raising. The benefit of embracing questions about race is that the poems are inhabited in a less invasive way than was common in the poetry Monroe published in *The New Poetry*, which prioritized poems with stereotypical ideas about race.<sup>87</sup> In other words, Stevens and Kreymborg, finally, may not know what to make of race but believe asking questions to be more productive than relying on stereotypes and timeworn tropes.

Though it is seemingly short and accessible, the arresting image in the first line of "The Silver Plough-Boy" makes it clear that Stevens was not interested in writing stereotypical poems about race. "The Silver Plough-Boy" is about race, but it is at once imaginative, open-minded, and slippery. It begins, "A black figure dances in a black field" (1), and the reader is given an image that invites questions about the race of the "black figure." The figure finds a sheet on the ground and "wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver" (3). The figure begins to dance, and the poem ends beautifully but without closure: "How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black figure slips from the wrinkled sheet! How softly the sheet falls to the ground!" (5). Stevens leaves the reader in the imaginative unknown, asking questions about race.

Unlike any other poem about race in other New Verse anthologies, Stevens does not use

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<sup>87</sup> Kreymborg does not completely avoid poems that function the same way racially as those in Monroe's *The New Poetry*. For instance, Kreymborg included one poem called "An Old Negro Asleep" by the poet Maxwell Bodenheim. The Bodenheim poem is paternalistic and typical of poetry about "Negroes" by early twentieth-century white poets. After waking, the man in the poem "squats afterward, making white grinning trinkets, / And thinks them the dreams he had" (7-8). This poem denigrates a black man for his simple dreams and for believing they were true. On its own, this poem accomplishes what Monroe's anthology does: it creates a realistic account of what white American culture thought of blacks. However, as we will see, this is the exception rather than the rule for Kreymborg's anthologies.

stereotypes; instead, the poem ends in a glorious flourish, and the figure is left in beautiful and unabashed nakedness. Stevens does not lead the reader to make judgments about the race of the figure but, instead, asks the reader to revel in the mystical beauty of the figure itself after the sheet “fades in the dust” and “falls to the ground.” The poem shows Stevens wrestling with the idea of race in unique ways, and because Kreymborg included it in the anthology, it shows he valued Stevens’s questioning approach.

Thinking in more depth about the ways Stevens was conceiving of race will help to clarify Kreymborg’s approach as well. DuPlessis points out that “Stevens’s glancing, and resisted, allusions to issues for black modernity (lynching, nightriders), do not destabilize his rural, tropical golden-age paradigm of primitivism and potency through which his speech is correspondingly ‘darkened’” (123). Stevens thought about issues that were important to black activists of the time,<sup>88</sup> but DuPlessis shows that he only does so in passing and does not extensively undercut existing stereotypes. For Stevens, in spite of the imaginative brilliance of his work, race was an isolated poetical experiment. Eric Keenaghan is more to the point: “Consequently, the very differences that Stevens may have found useful stand in the way of his ability to reimagine a new national community grounded upon an equitable and dialogic relationship between men across a cultural divide” (459). For Americans like Stevens, and by extension Kreymborg, thinking about

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<sup>88</sup> The NAACP, for example, had been fighting against lynching since the organization was founded in 1909. James Weldon Johnson began work for the NAACP in 1916 and led an anti-racism parade in New York in 1917, later coining the term “red summer” in 1919. To some extent, Stevens and Kreymborg would have been familiar with these developments.

race in new ways was primarily thinking, and the idea that a whole new paradigm of equal rights was even possible may not have occurred to them.<sup>89</sup>

With that said, Kreymborg's innovative editorial methods were still prescient, and he continued to use print to show that ideas about race could change and were changing. For instance, he began to print the African-American poet Fenton Johnson in the *Others* magazine in 1919. Kreymborg included him in the magazine and later in the final *Others* anthology in 1920. Kreymborg's ideas about race and poetry went beyond the purely theoretical of Stevens's admittedly vague lines about blackness. Putting Johnson's poems in the final *Others* anthology shows that Kreymborg wanted the poet to be a significant and memorable part of the *Others* legacy. While Lowell and Monroe's anthologies reflect the views of the contemporary dominant culture, Kreymborg's selections begin to make an attempt at subverting it. Suzanne Churchill points out the limited progress of *Others*: "for the American avant-garde of the 1910s...the category of 'Otherness' overcame barriers of gender, nationality, and class, but did not transcend the racial divide" (7). This is true to a point, but by comparing these anthologies, we see that Kreymborg's set a precedent that others would follow. When we realize that Fenton Johnson was not only printed in two different issues of *Others* (Feb. 1919 and Apr./May 1919) but also appeared in the last *Others* anthology, it becomes evident that Kreymborg put his faith in

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<sup>89</sup> It needs to be noted that the artists of Greenwich Village were not known for being interested in mixing races. Mina Loy, for example, had contradictory ideas about this. Aimee Pozorski writes, "in unmasking Loy's own illusions, her rhetoric of liberation appears as paradoxically entangled with the discourse of racial purification that informs her radical experimentation as a poet" (41). Kreymborg does not mention race outright, but we must be careful not to pluck him out of his context, because two times in *Troubadour* (1925) he uses the word "nigger"—"niggers in the woodpile" (255) and "there must be the usual nigger somewhere" (271)—; the words are later edited out in the 1957 edition. On the surface, this elision merely shows the way culture had changed in the thirty years between editions, but the use of the word in 1925 shows that Kreymborg was still firmly planted in the thought of the culture of the time, which, in one sense, puts him much in the same category as Lowell and Monroe.

a poet who was overlooked by Lowell and Monroe in their anthologies.<sup>90</sup>

Kreymborg's "pioneer editing" included a step across cultural boundaries that no other editor had yet attempted. Though he was no activist, Kreymborg had started a trend that other editors would follow in the 1920s, putting him ahead of his time. His editorial strategies show how vital geographic regions were for the creation and publication of New Verse anthologies. If Kreymborg had lived in Boston or Chicago instead of Greenwich Village, we certainly would not have the same *Others* anthologies that we do. Kreymborg's experiences in New York began to teach him to repudiate the critical climate that pushed for cultural ownership and the right to an elite cultural "inheritance." In this way, then, Kreymborg's region changed him and prepared him to be the first white editor to give African-American poets a place in the growing canon of modern poetry.

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<sup>90</sup> Monroe printed Johnson's "Three Negro Spirituals" in *Poetry* in June 1918. Monroe begins to favor African-American poets in the 1923 and 1932 editions of her anthology.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### “NOT JUST ANOTHER POETRY ANTHOLOGY”: BRAITHWAITE, JOHNSON, AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN POETRY

You do not have to look far to find disparaging remarks about William Stanley Braithwaite. His contemporaries and ours—including critics, editors, and poets—have plenty of criticism to send his way. Conrad Aiken—a Boston acquaintance turned literary opponent—believed that Braithwaite’s “quaint notion of the holiness of poetry” compelled poets to write poetry that was “all marshmallows and tears” (qtd. in Szeferl, “Encouraging Verse” 51).<sup>1</sup> Louis Untermeyer—the poet turned critic and anthologist—called the yearly *Anthology of Magazine Verse* “Braithwaite’s yearly blunder” and “a monument of mediocrity” (qtd. in Abbott, “Magazine Verse” 154).<sup>2</sup> Claude McKay—who called on Braithwaite for help early in his career—ended up calling Braithwaite’s poetry “both bad and worthless” and said that he had become the “Booker T. Washington of American literature—a bred-in-the-bone sycophant” (qtd. in Hutchinson, *Harlem* 353-54).<sup>3</sup> And if this onslaught of criticism is not enough, he had to endure overt (and hidden)

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<sup>1</sup> Braithwaite was one of the first to publish Aiken. Aiken’s long “Sonata in Pathos” headlined the November 1917 issue of Braithwaite’s short-lived *Poetry Journal*.

<sup>2</sup> Untermeyer’s ideas also changed significantly by the time he made these comments. According to Braithwaite, in 1915 Untermeyer called the yearly *Anthology of Magazine Verse* “an institution; it’s for us all” and wrote that if the anthology was underfunded (which it almost always was) then “we ought all to help” (“Letter to Amy Lowell”).

<sup>3</sup> McKaye’s 1937 autobiography *A Long Way From Home* less colorfully explains his relationship with Braithwaite (26-28).

racism throughout his career, most notably from literary gatekeepers in Boston and New York, but also from Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* office in Chicago.<sup>4</sup>

When twentieth-century critics mention Braithwaite, it is almost always to disparage him or make the argument that he was a sellout to his race or a detriment to American poetry in general. J. Saunders Redding's *To Make a Poet Black* (1939) argues that Braithwaite "is the most outstanding example of perverted energy that the period from 1903 to 1917 produced" (89) and that Braithwaite's acceptance of Boston culture was his excuse "for divergence from the racial norm of creative ends" (90). In his *Black Poets of America* (1973), Jean Wagner argues that Braithwaite's "work constitutes a kind of disavowal of the race" and that his "persistent silence certainly amounts to the rejection of his blackness" (128). Wagner continues this line of reasoning: "The facts impose on us the conclusion that Braithwaite had not the least desire to be identified with the black world and what it stands for. There is consequently no need to examine him" (128). Finally, in 1974, Louis Rubin writes that "Braithwaite represents an especially

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<sup>4</sup> Braithwaite experienced racism in the workplace starting at an early age. At his first job in a department store, his position was "reserved for a colored boy" (Braithwaite, "House" 133), but a "little thinking [about how to advance in this position] out-maneuvered a whole battalion of minds whose intrenched [sic] racial superiority was historically established, and whose caste system was manifested in the inferior employment reserved for my kind in their business" (136). When he had come of age, Braithwaite went looking for work in New York and was turned down for jobs he was overqualified for; when asked his nationality, "the answer, 'I am an American Negro,' invariably lost him the job" (qtd. in Szefer, "Encouraging Verse" 36). Robert Frost's relationship with him begins to show that many if not a majority of Braithwaite's contemporaries looked down on him. Though Frost felt comfortable calling Braithwaite a "nigger" in private correspondence with a friend, he happily condescended to meet with Braithwaite to publicize his *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston* (qtd. in Szefer, "Encouraging Verse" 48). Ezra Pound and Alice Corbin Henderson (the assistant-editor at *Poetry*) wrote about Braithwaite in similar terms. In a letter to Henderson, Pound writes, "Sorry [to learn that] Braithwaite is a nigger...a Boston coon!! That explains a lot" (Nadel, *Letters* 15). Also, Henderson writes to Harriet Monroe: "Braithwaite certainly writes 'darky' English...hardly the trace of logic or sequence and almost less than the ghost of an idea...You could not cut out the nigger" (qtd. in Szefer, "Beauty" 576).

interesting problem” because of his “refusal to use the condition of the black man as subject matter for his poetry,” making his poetry “deficient in importance both for society and self” (31-32). Braithwaite has been largely ignored because he was writing poetry that did not fit with the changing tastes of the modernists and the New Critics to come, but these mid- to late-twentieth century critics wrote him off as an African-American poet primarily because his poetic identity was not sufficiently black.<sup>5</sup>

Most literary histories overlook Braithwaite or relegate him to a footnote. In fact, literary research virtually erases Braithwaite from histories of American poetry, giving priority to accepted genealogies and canons.<sup>6</sup> For example, the journal *American Literary History* published articles about canonical modern poets and even Monroe’s *Poetry* but never published an article on Braithwaite.<sup>7</sup> *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Volume 5: Poetry and Criticism, 1900-1950* was first published in 2003. In this volume’s 615 pages, Braithwaite is never mentioned. This is a particularly conspicuous omission since the first article in the collection is called “Anthologies and Audience, Genteel to Modern.” Especially troubling, because Braithwaite was primarily a literary critic, is Hazel Arnett Ervin’s omission of Braithwaite from her 1999 collection

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<sup>5</sup> It is easier for a twenty-first century critic like myself to point out the essentialism in these statements of black poetic identity than it was for these critics writing in the seventies. We will see that Braithwaite had different ideas than most African-American poets about racial uplift through poetry, most of which mirror W.E.B. Du Bois’s ideas. Also, though these critics denounce him for betraying his race, they also overlook his work as a critic, editor, and publisher.

<sup>6</sup> This would be especially surprising to James Weldon Johnson, who said of Braithwaite in 1922: “It is a recognized fact that in the work which preceded the present revival of poetry in the United States, no one rendered more unremitting and valuable service than Mr. Braithwaite. And it can be said that no future study of American poetry of this age can be made without reference to Braithwaite” (*Book* xlii).

<sup>7</sup> *American Literary History* did publish Susan Gilman’s 1996 “Pauline Hopkins and the Occult: African-American Revisions of Nineteenth-Century Sciences,” which mentions Braithwaite in passing. Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams and others are strongly represented.

*African American Literary Criticism, 1773-2000*. Perhaps most glaring, however, is the failure of Ian Hamilton's *Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* (1994) even to mention Braithwaite among fifteen hundred entries. Hamilton does include editors like Alfred Kreymborg and Louis Untermeyer, who are similarly (if not less) influential than Braithwaite.<sup>8</sup>

While Braithwaite is derided or forgotten, poets and critics remember his friend and colleague James Weldon Johnson much more fondly and frequently.<sup>9</sup> Braithwaite's influence was waning by 1920, while James Weldon Johnson was becoming a cultural force. The two literary men corresponded frequently after Johnson's poems began to appear in the *Century* and the *Independent*, and Braithwaite was Johnson's primary poetry mentor for most of the 1910s.<sup>10</sup> Though Johnson published the wildly popular *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* in 1912, he did so anonymously (and did not publicly reveal his authorship until 1927, when a new edition came out).<sup>11</sup> Johnson's "Fifty Years" was famously first published in the Jan. 1, 1913 edition of the *New York*

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<sup>8</sup> Hamilton's *Companion* includes three mentions of Kreymborg and four of Untermeyer. Each poet receives a full entry as well. Though these two editors receive more attention because of their connection to canonical modernists, this says more about our problematic critical proclivities than it does about these editors or their work.

<sup>9</sup> A search for articles about Johnson in the *MLA International Bibliography* elicits 206 results, many of which take the *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* as their subject. Only four of these results have to do with Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry*, however. For Braithwaite, on the other hand, the *MLA International Bibliography* records eighteen total results, with twelve matches taking him as the main subject.

<sup>10</sup> Though the archive does not provide indisputable dates for their first acquaintance, they were corresponding as early as July 1911. At least one hundred pages of letters are collected in the William Stanley Braithwaite Collection at Houghton Library at Harvard University.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce Dickson helpfully recounts the way the news of Johnson's authorship came out earlier than 1927, noting that Braithwaite wrote to him as early as 1913 to say congratulations "despite the fact that I shouldn't know" (253). In a list of books for sale, the Jan. 1916 *Crisis* still designates the author as "Anonymous" (106), but the title page of his first book of poetry *Fifty Years and Other Poems* (1917) reads: "by James Weldon Johnson, author of 'The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man,' etc."



*Times* (16). After that, Johnson's poems began to appear regularly. Braithwaite first included one of Johnson's poems in *The Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915*, and Braithwaite's Cornhill Publishing in Boston published Johnson's *Fifty Years and Other Poems* in 1917. Johnson finally began to organize his own anthology as the 1920s began, and the first edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* came out in 1922—when his career really began to take off. Most all of Johnson's works have received critical attention, and Johnson's poems appear in almost every collection of African-American literature and poetry.<sup>12</sup>

Most twentieth-century considerations of William Stanley Braithwaite are misguided. Furthermore, the research on James Weldon Johnson's anthologies is severely lacking. Twentieth-century studies too easily dismiss Braithwaite's influence and underestimate the value of Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry*. Both Braithwaite's and Johnson's places in the history of African-American poetry need to be reevaluated; in particular, more should be said about the way their work with anthologies changed not only the way that Americans read African-American poetry but also the way Americans in general read poetry. In 1913, Pound used the *New Verse* anthology to create a movement and glamorize a new modernist poetry, but Braithwaite and Johnson go further, using the *New Verse* anthology to create large audiences for new poetry in an effort to expand the ways that audiences conceive of poetry, the poet, and the American individual. Both Pound and Braithwaite saw the promise of the *New Verse* anthology earlier than most, and Johnson took notice of their methods. Though part of my purpose

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<sup>12</sup> There is a dearth of criticism on Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925) and *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1926), however. Both books were popular and went through multiple editions.

here is to resituate Braithwaite and Johnson as poets and literary figures, this chapter exists to show that much of their importance in American literature comes from the anthologies they edited. Without these two figures and their different uses of the poetry anthology, African-American poetry, the Harlem Renaissance, and the way anthologies are used in higher education today would not exist in their present forms. Because newspapers, magazines, and journals regularly omitted African Americans entirely, New Verse anthologies began to make African-American poetry visible and acceptable to general audiences in the U.S. The work of William Stanley Braithwaite and James Weldon Johnson made poetry anthologies the single most influential printed vehicle for African-American poetry in the twentieth century.

### **Slowly Changing Perceptions in the Research**

Philip Butcher, the only critic to speak well of Braithwaite in the seventies, collected *The William Stanley Braithwaite Reader* in 1972. In his introduction, Butcher describes Braithwaite's critical reception:

This poet, critic, editor, anthologist, and publisher, whose books fill a whole shelf, has been ignored or slighted in most textbooks and histories of American literature as a whole, and even in the current flood of anthologies and studies of "the black experience" he has received less recognition than his labors and accomplishments merit. This volume of selections from his works is designed to rescue the achievement of William Stanley Braithwaite from undeserved neglect. (1)

Butcher's collection presents a selection of Braithwaite's early magazine articles, critical essays, snippets of his autobiography, and over fifty letters to well-known writers and editors like William Dean Howells, Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, Claude McKay, Alain

Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois, Nella Larsen, Marianne Moore, and Robert Frost.<sup>13</sup>

Butcher's introduction is only seven pages long, most of which is biography; his purpose, then, is to make Braithwaite's writings accessible. He says, "One way to give Braithwaite his due is to let him speak for himself," because he is "an admirable man whose career in American letters is without parallel" (6-7). Considering most of what had been written about Braithwaite in the 1970s, Butcher was right to use the term "rescue." As such, I credit Butcher for a turn in critical reception towards Braithwaite, though the change was slow in coming. He writes, "William Stanley Braithwaite's stature is sure to grow as scholars give attention to the records of his life and work," and Butcher hoped the *William Stanley Braithwaite Reader* would "inspire and facilitate their labors" (7).

Using his volume in just that way, at least two other critics began to speak about Braithwaite in reasonable and favorable terms in the 1980s. In 1986, Kenny J. Williams wrote a detailed account pointing out that Braithwaite's "service in the cause of poetry in the United States has not been fully assessed. Given his importance in American literary circles, it is curious that so little has been written about him"; in fact, the introductions to Braithwaite's many anthologies and books "give a clear indication of the evolution of his critical point of view as they record one of the most complete surveys of the history of American poetry" (8). Williams also saw what the critics from the '70s missed: "Ultimately, appreciating Braithwaite means accepting not only the diversity of Afro-American literature but also assuming that blackness and whiteness are not in themselves determining artistic or evaluative criteria" (9). In 1987, William H. Robinson continues

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<sup>13</sup> Butcher omits Braithwaite's verse from his collection because "volumes of his poems may be had in reprint editions, and several of his lyrics are available in anthologies" (6).

where Williams left off: “To many people who read his work casually, William Stanley Braithwaite could and does seem to be something of a baffling and self-deluded enigma” (4). Robinson also points out how he helped popularize modern poetry, however:

Braithwaite became acknowledged as one of the most widely read and authoritative American literary critics and anthologists of the first several decades of the twentieth century, and indeed, he shares with Harriet Monroe...much of the credit for bullying and cajoling American readers into accepting modern and unconventional writings. A conservative and conventional writer himself, he was more open than most of his contemporaries to the unusual and the experimental and played an important role in the recognition and indeed acceptance of modernist writing in North America. (4)

Williams and Robinson both published their research in different volumes of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, which made their positive comments about Braithwaite more accessible than ever before.

As views about Braithwaite began to slowly change, studies on James Weldon Johnson continued to focus on his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. A few scholars did begin to study his work as a publisher and editor,<sup>14</sup> and the most helpful article of this kind is Tess Chakkalakal’s 2005 “‘Making a Collection’: James Weldon Johnson and the Mission of African-American Literature.” She contextualizes Johnson’s work on *The Book of American Negro Poetry* by describing Johnson’s relationship with his mentor Brander Matthews (528).<sup>15</sup> She goes on to compare his work with Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s

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<sup>14</sup> Clarence Amann’s 1970 article compares Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, while mentioning Johnson more generally. Kenneth Kinnamon’s 1991 article surveys the reception of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Chesnutt, and James Weldon Johnson in anthologies over a long period of time.

<sup>15</sup> Brander Matthews (who I also mention in chapter 2) was a well-respected, well-connected literary critic from Columbia University; he corresponded with people like Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and President Theodore Roosevelt (in office from 1901-09).

and Nellie McKay's 2004 *Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*. In doing so, she suggests "that collecting individual texts to produce a single, collective body of African-American literature is an important but neglected feature of Johnson's fiction and broader racial project that has come to shape our notion of African-American literature today" (525). Chakkalakal considers Braithwaite but only points out his unsuccessful attempt to find a publisher for an African-American anthology in 1906 (Szefer, *Gospel* 249). She comes to the conclusion that Braithwaite "was never able to make his dream of editing an African-American literary anthology come true [because] he lacked the political connections to produce [one]." Chakkalakal dismisses him by saying "Braithwaite was merely a literary man" (536). Despite overlooking Braithwaite, she makes a helpful final point about *The Book of American Negro Poetry*:

The literary anthology became for Johnson the only way to explain the importance and worth of African Americans during a time in American history when it was possible to be lynched for the mere fact of being African American...The African-American literary anthology thus functions as a speech act, providing form for African Americans themselves to speak. (538-39)

Even though this idea better applies to the first two decades of the twentieth century, it is a particularly insightful comment because African Americans had very few literary outlets. This chapter repositions Chakkalakal's point about the anthology form as an African-American "speech act" by including the work done by Braithwaite before Johnson's anthology and expanding and exploring the way this "speech act" affected African-American culture.

Lisa Szefer is the only contemporary literary critic writing about Braithwaite who fully recreates the context of the changing literary world in which he lived, the work that

he did to popularize poetry in the U.S., and the pressures that limited his output through every stage of his career. In one of the reviews on the back cover of Szefer's 2011 *The Gospel of Beauty in the Progressive Era*, Lara Vetter claims that Szefer's "book of literary history is an important corrective to studies of modern American poetry because it shifts our critical lens from European and American expatriate to U.S. regionalists, and from canonical poets to editors rarely acknowledged for their work in constructing the conditions by which those poets became canonical." Szefer's book and two earlier articles on Braithwaite painstakingly recreate his career and show that he was doing more than anyone has given him credit for. Szefer seems to embrace the cultural moment and let the time period speak for itself without allowing the biases of twentieth-century research to skew her arguments. Her overall project places Braithwaite in the genteel tradition in literature as a poet while also showing that his influence as an anthologist and critic extended to poetry that was not like his.

In Szefer's 2001 "Encouraging Verse: William S. Braithwaite and the Poetics of Race," she prefaces her argument by showing that Braithwaite faced more than just an American public that was uninterested in poetry. "In a society that venerated businessmen and a Protestant work ethic, pursuing a career in poetry seemed precious, and so aspiring bards such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and Robert Frost sought more cordial prospects overseas. The situation for African-American men was even more dismal" (32). Using this description of American society as a foundation, Szefer continues with her full argument:

It is remarkable, then, that one person responsible for resuscitating American's moribund literary life was an African American, poet and critic William Stanley Braithwaite. . . . Six years before the establishment

of the Poetry Society of America and eight years before the founding of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, Braithwaite single-handedly promoted the cause of American poetry. . . . (33)

In the time since she made this pronouncement in 2001, Szefer has been the only critic writing articles and books dedicated to Braithwaite.<sup>16</sup> This chapter builds upon Szefer's work by focusing on the way Braithwaite used anthologies.

### **Braithwaite and Johnson on Race and Poetry**

When early twentieth-century African-Americans wrote poems and stories, they were—whether they were conscious of it or not—writing for a very complex audience that forced them to address a distinct problem. William Andrews describes this dilemma as the “double audience”: the two audiences ask the author to write in a certain way, “one demanding protest against racial injustice, the other expecting a pleasant excursion into black life as local color” (xvi). Both audiences have expectations that not only affect what an author writes but also the way that their books are printed, promoted, and finally received by that particular audience. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the only way for an African-American author to be published before a large (read: white) audience was through white publishers.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, these authors then had a “triple audience” that included African-American readers, white readers, and potential white

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<sup>16</sup> There are a few mentions of Braithwaite during this time, however. For instance, *Modernism/modernity* prints Braithwaite's name two times since 2001; both instances are brief mentions in articles about Jean Toomer and Countee Cullen (Whalan; Kuenz). In 2011, *The Cambridge History of African-American Literature* (2011) offers an evenhanded overview of his work (Graham).

<sup>17</sup> Amy Lee writes that African-American writers “could not achieve real success unless they published with a major white firm,” and “lesser black writers had to struggle to prove themselves to white companies” (252). Also, Young describes this unique dynamic: “Minority texts are edited, produced, and advertised as representing a ‘particular’ black experience to a ‘universal,’ implicitly white (although itself ethnically constructed) audience. The American publishing industry, that is, has historically inscribed a mythologized version of the ‘black experience’ onto all works marked by race, in much the same way that, for much of the twentieth century, American jurists ascribed an innate blackness to all bodies marked as such, even if at the invisible and seemingly unknowable level of a drop of blood” (4).

publishers. If they could not ingratiate white publishers and readers with innocuous stories and poems, they would not be published. But their black audience would not be satisfied if they did not speak out against racial injustice. Some African-American writers pleased all three audiences by creating what Sugimori calls “seemingly unconflicted interpretive space” that satisfies white readers (and publishers) and implicitly speaks out against racial injustice (44). This kind of writing does not offend white publishers or readers but does simultaneously present coded information to African Americans. Because of the sensitive balance this kind of writing required, few authors were able to pull it off. Both in their writing and their work as anthology editors, William Stanley Braithwaite and James Weldon Johnson were able to achieve some level of this “seemingly unconflicted interpretive space,” and in doing so, their work presented racial themes to large audiences as never before.

Braithwaite dealt with the dilemma of the “double audience” from the very beginning of his career as a poet, and when he began soliciting publishers for his first book of poetry in 1899 and 1900, it was important to him to identify as African American. His first attempt was a letter to the publishers at L.C. Page & Co. in 1899 that included this caveat: “Do not be surprised therefore should I inform you that I am an American Negro, a Bostonian by birth, and received my M.A. from Nature’s University of ‘Seek, Observe and Utilize’ and am now in my 20<sup>th</sup> year” (Braithwaite, “Letter to L.C. Page & Co.”). Later that year, when Braithwaite introduced himself to Howells, the first line of this letter reads: “I am an American Negro in my twentieth year who has just come to New York with a *MS* with the hope of disposing of it to a publisher” (“Letter to William Dean Howells”). Four months afterwards, he wrote to the foremost anthology



editor of poetry in the United States, Edmund C. Stedman (his *An American Anthology* came out in 1900). Braithwaite wrote: “I am an American Negro youth, who has written considerable poetry, and who would ask of you critical advice and assistance in the literary world” (“Letter to Edmund C. Stedman”).<sup>18</sup> This poetry for which Braithwaite was hoping to find a publisher probably did not overtly contain racial themes, as can be seen from his first published poems in the *Colored American Magazine*, none of which take race as an issue.<sup>19</sup> Braithwaite, like Dunbar before him, had learned quickly that there was a very narrow audience for poetry and that he would have to appeal to white publishers and audiences in these first years of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup>

As Braithwaite learned what kind of poetry publishing companies in Boston would publish, he began to identify in his writing not as an African American but as a poet and critic from Boston. Some of his reasoning is found in his 1907 letter to Ray Stannard Baker, who had contacted Braithwaite to get information for his upcoming book *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era* (1908).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There is no known record of a return letter or advocacy on Braithwaite’s behalf from L.C. Page & Co., Howells, or Stedman. Also, there is no indication of the content of the poems he left with these publishers.

<sup>19</sup> Braithwaite’s “In My Garden” from the June 1901 issue is a representative example: “Today is sunny June, the breeze is soft / And pauses sweetly dying where I sit, / Here in my dear old garden where aloft / The tuneful birds about me sing and flit. // And here today no longing breaks my calm, / No mad desire fraught with ceaseless strife” (83).

<sup>20</sup> Braithwaite knew well the position of Paul Laurence Dunbar and the kind of poetry he had published. Dunbar’s fame for dialect poetry (that necessarily pleased white publishers) is unrivaled. The humor and self-conscious performance present in his work shows that he too responded to the “double audience.” Braithwaite’s major themes (like serious romantic love) must have been inspired by Dunbar’s famous love poems. We do not, however, see Braithwaite follow Dunbar at all in shrewd protest works like Dunbar’s slave poem “Accountability” or the more direct “We Wear the Mask.” Though these poems are singular within Dunbar’s body of work, they adumbrate the African-American protest poems that started to appear at the end of the 1910s.

<sup>21</sup> A few details from Braithwaite’s letter made it into Baker’s book. Baker writes about a few educated and successful “colored” men in Boston, including a Dr. Courtney and Braithwaite himself. The last sentence in the paragraph accedes: “Several of these men meet white people socially more or less” (120).

Baker asked Braithwaite why his poetry did not have any evidence of being written by an African American. Braithwaite answered, “The question you ask concerning a racial note in my verse is one that I have often had put me. I confess that in my earliest days of poetic expression I had a great ambition to do that sort of thing—and I tried it to a realization of failure” (“Letter to Ray Stannard Baker”). Braithwaite continued by saying his poetry focused on universal beauty rather than race or politics: “human brotherhood...was something I discovered to be holier than patriotism or race—the perfect goodness, the absolute beauty, the divine evolutions of spiritual and physical growth towards the perfection of God’s conception of man.”<sup>22</sup> This approach caused many of Braithwaite’s contemporaries—not to mention later critics—to conclude that he had abandoned race altogether. For example, Szefel concludes: “With his efforts to improve the rights and representation of blacks on political and cultural fronts coming to naught, Braithwaite decided to pursue a strategy that extended beyond race” (*Gospel of Beauty* 135). In some ways, his strategy was to avoid mentioning race (mostly in his poetry); however, we will see his work as a critic and an editor was never separate from race.

Braithwaite always worked on behalf of African-American poets, even if his efforts were not plain to most observers; this point becomes clear from his work in the years leading up to his first *Anthology of Magazine Verse* in 1913. Most significantly because of the position and venue, W. E. B. Du Bois asked Braithwaite, who he called

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<sup>22</sup> His ideas in politics follow a similar path. Equal rights should be extended to all, but all other kinds of equality must be earned: “To grant political justice collectively to any of the heterogenous [sic] races in this country is all that can be asked; equality in all other aspects depends upon the individual—and can be attained” (Braithwaite, “Letter to New York *World*”).

“the most prominent critic of poetry in America,” to be the literary editor of the *Crisis* when it began publication in Nov. 1910. Braithwaite held the position for over a decade (Butcher 1).<sup>23</sup> He also wrote the introduction for Edward Smyth Jones’s *The Sylvan Cabin* in 1911. Jones’s famous history made this collection a sensation in Boston,<sup>24</sup> and Braithwaite’s decision to write the introduction not only demonstrates his support for this young poet but also shows that he was pleased to identify with African-American poets. In the introduction, Braithwaite says Jones’s work has a larger “significance in voicing the aspirations of those for whom...he becomes a voice, a representative” (Jones 7). Though there are poems on typical themes in the book, titles like “Tribute to Dunbar” and “Ode to Ethiopia: To the Aspiring Negro Youth” illustrate how overtly racial the collection was.<sup>25</sup> Braithwaite also discovered and began to advocate for James Weldon Johnson and his poetry as early as 1910. In his annual *Transcript* review for 1910 called “Magazines and Poets,” Braithwaite wrote about the young poets of the day and

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<sup>23</sup> Du Bois and Braithwaite had similar views of beauty, aesthetics, and even politics. Braithwaite wrote that the prose in *The Souls of Black Folks* was a kind of poetry and that Du Bois “began a poetic tradition” that would bring African Americans what they wanted and deserved: “It is only through the intense, passionate, spiritual idealism of such substance as makes *The Souls of Black Folk* such quivering rhapsody of wrongs endured and hopes to be fulfilled that the poets of the race with compelling artistry can lift the Negro into the only full and complete nationalism he knows—that of the American democracy” (qtd. in Hutchinson, *Harlem* 150).

<sup>24</sup> Braithwaite’s introduction describes Jones’s “unique experience,” which gained him a “precipitate sort of fame” as a “passionate desire to go to college...that involved the tramping of dusty and hungry miles” all the way to Harvard. Having come all the way from Indianapolis on foot, he reached Harvard Square in hopes of attending college. He was arrested and jailed, which is where he wrote his famous poem “Harvard Square.” The poem resulted in his release from prison by order of Justice Arthur P. Stone, to whom Jones’s book is dedicated. The book was printed by Sherman, French and Co. in Boston, the same firm that asked James Weldon Johnson to put out a collection of his poems in 1911 (though he never published with them).

<sup>25</sup> This particular copy of *The Sylvan Cabin* resides in the special collections of DeGolyer Library at Southern Methodist University. The previous owner of the book typed and pasted into the back of the book a description of Jones and the publication history of “Harvard Square.” The description calls the book “scarce” and mentions that Jones was able to attend the Boston Latin School because “publicity brought him funds.” (Call number: PS3519.O38 S8 1911) In 1915, Taylor and Taylor republished the book in San Francisco.

mentioned Johnson's "Mother Night," which was published in the *Century* that year.<sup>26</sup>

Though a cursory look at Braithwaite's poetry and early editions makes him seem like a one-sided figure, the kind of work he did for African-American poets shows that he is far more complex than many have understood.

Braithwaite did not completely abandon race in his poetry either. Many of his poems escape literary remembrance for a reason, but he wrote more than a few startlingly good poems that present a "seemingly unconflicted interpretive space" by showing his life both as a man of letters in Boston and his interior moods as an African-American poet.<sup>27</sup> One of these poems is called "In the Athenaeum Looking out on the Granary Burying Ground on a Rainy Day in November." This poem was published in 1908 as a part of his second book of poetry, *The House of Falling Leaves*. The book contains sixty-three poems, most of them short lyrics about beauty (like "Golden Hair," with lines like "Once I made a little poem out of golden hair, / I put it in a dream and sent it to a rose") or tributes to literary figures (like "William Dean Howells: For His Seventieth Birthday" with its lines: "Seventy years has Howells grown / Through the infinite seen to the finite

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<sup>26</sup> In this article, Braithwaite says "the old and honored heads of song are all gone," and the "new and genuine voices in poetry find it difficult to find an immediate hearing" (21). Furthermore, he explains that "the last twenty years in America has been a breaking from the bonds of the old achievements to a recognition and acceptance of what the new promises" (21). He mentions Anna Hempstead Branch, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Ridgely Torrence, Arthur Upson, Frederic Lawrence Knowles, Cale Young Rice, Olive Hurd Dargan, and Thomas S. Jones, Jr. as the best new poets of the 1910s. James Weldson Johnson is not mentioned until Braithwaite begins to list the best poems of the year, and even then, only this is printed: "Mother Night, James W. Johnson" (21). This early article is evidence, then, that Braithwaite knew about Johnson's work from its earliest publications and that he started to promote Johnson very early in his career. This short mention by Braithwaite caused Sherman, French and Co. to contact Johnson about the possibility of putting out a book (which never materialized) and shows the power the annual magazines reviews had.

<sup>27</sup> Braithwaite's best poems survive in both Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry* and Hughes's and Bontemps's *The Poetry of the Negro*. Additionally, Bontemps says Braithwaite's 1948 *Selected Poems* was discussed in college classrooms soon after its release (Bontemps 246).

known”). These more trivial poems make “In the Athenaeum” conspicuous for both its complex introspection and tangible detail.

The poem opens with a description of an interior space, spends time perusing the ideals contained in the library books, and then ends with a comparison between the rainy exterior world and the robust reality of ideas that the library holds.

Here in this ancient, dusty room  
Filled with the rain-washed chill and gloom,  
The wistful books stand 'round in hosts —  
Familiar friends of forgotten ghosts... (lines 1-4)

The speaker contrasts the dank room with the “wistful books” that the “unremembering city throng” ignores (7). The interior of the room—a dirty material space—is thus connected to the mob of unthinking people outside, while the books and the speaker hold ideals and even pain in common:

I feel the damp creep around my heart  
Because my thoughts have grown a part  
Of the infinite, ancient sense of pain  
Echoing voices in the rain. (13-16)

Human experience bespeaks suffering, both physical and emotional:

How old the world is—yet I think  
No man has yet had his full drink  
Of joy, while life flowed in his veins  
Or disillusion racked his brains. (25-28)

The final four lines play on graves, bodies, and the specters of ancient authors:

How like a picture shadow-bound  
That street is ‘cross the burial ground!  
And from this room those forms out there  
Are not so real as ghosts in here. (29-32)

These lines transform the earthy reality of graves into shadows and give robust form to the ghosts between the covers of books. But with this inversion of reality, there is also the

strong sense that the speaker cannot relate to the people outside the window—that the speaker is hiding and seeking solace in the presence of the ancient authors.

It is hard not to read this poem as a personal confession from Braithwaite that satisfies white readers and speaks to the African-American struggle. After his father died, Braithwaite was sent to public school for a few years before being forced to take jobs to support the family. As an adolescent, Braithwaite taught himself the classics and became more knowledgeable than most educated citizens in Boston. He must have done much of this reading in the Boston Public Library, which was one of the first public libraries in the U.S. and was opened to the public in 1848. The choice to write a poem set inside the Athenaeum shows that he had graduated to a more refined part of culture; private libraries like the Athenaeum catered to the rich and signified a kind of cultural acceptance and membership.<sup>28</sup> This surface of the poem would appeal to all readers, presumably (mostly white) readers who spent time in the library. Even so, Braithwaite still sees himself as an interloper, which explains why the tone of the poem is ambivalent, showing a figure in a privileged place who is painfully aware of his tenuous position. If a reader did not know that Braithwaite was African American, the poem would still be strong but would lack the complexity of feeling that is present in this fuller reading. Braithwaite uses the first-person singular pronoun three times in the poem (“I feel,” “I feel,” and “I think”), as if to remind the reader of the connection between the speaker and himself as a black individual who must function in a white society. As much as he tried to overcome

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<sup>28</sup> Braithwaite’s poem predates Amy Lowell’s “Athenæum” poem by four years. Where his poem questions the place of a marginalized figure in a privileged space, Lowell’s poem does almost the opposite. They both claim a connection to the ancient texts, but Lowell’s poem assumes ownership of a heritage, “For this is ours!” (see Chapter 2), while Braithwaite’s speaker relates to ancient pain and not victory (see lines 13-16 above).

this disjunction by becoming part of the Boston literary society, Braithwaite was always reliant upon that same society and lived with this double consciousness his whole life.<sup>29</sup> This double consciousness is particularly evident in the way this poem appeals to the “double audience.” It is not surprising that his future anthologies followed the same pattern.

These experiences writing poetry and criticism in Boston shaped Braithwaite’s theories about race and art, and his ideas about African-American literary creation culminated in his 1925 essay “The Negro in American Literature.” The better part of this essay is a history of African-American literary production that begins by pointing out what black authors were up against: “In the generations that he has been so voluminously written and talked about he has been accorded as little artistic justice as social justice” (29). In spite of this lack of justice, Braithwaite believed that a “new literary generation” was writing poetry, the best of which “is racial in substance, but with the universal note, with the conscious background of the full heritage of English poetry” (38). This quotation captures Braithwaite’s foundational beliefs about African-American poetry: the most important goal of the poet is to arrest the reader with universal ideals and beauty, with racial content becoming of subordinate importance. He states this belief more directly when he says, “Negro poetic expression hovers for the moment, pardonably perhaps, over the race problem, but its highest allegiance is to Poetry—it must soar” (40). Braithwaite

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<sup>29</sup> Du Bois, who coined this term in *The Souls of Black Folk*, described it as the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (3). Braithwaite’s reliance on this society was also problematic because he frequently experienced racism at its hands. George Hutchinson says “the effect of sheer racism in its baldest forms upon Braithwaite’s career would be impossible to calculate, particularly because of his own reticence on the issue” (*Harlem* 354).

provides Jean Toomer as an example of his theory: “we come upon the very first artist of the race, who...can write about the Negro without the surrender or compromise of the artist’s vision” (44). For Braithwaite, then, African-American (and indeed all) poetic creation should appeal to the human spirit; doing so would help African Americans to see beauty beyond the race problem and would have the added benefit of appealing to all audiences.

James Weldon Johnson’s experiences and poetry are in some ways very similar to Braithwaite’s, but the two figures ultimately came to disagree about the function of African-American poetry. Johnson’s first publications were short lyrics that he wrote and his brother Rosamond Johnson put to music; the earliest of these was “Sense You Went Away,” which was first published in the *Century* in Feb. 1900. After acting as principal to a small school in Jacksonville, Florida, becoming the first African American to be admitted to the bar in Florida in 1898, and working on Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential campaign in 1904, Johnson accepted a position as the U.S. Consul at Puerto Caballo, Venezuela (*Along This Way* 122, 144, 218, 223). Johnson wrote about his motive for moving to Venezuela, “When I had no official duties to perform, I made it my business to use that period in getting ahead with my writing, to do which had been one of my chief reasons for entering the Consular Service” (237). During his work overseas, Johnson began placing poems in the *Independent* and the *Century*. The *Independent* published his first poems during this period: the dialect poem “Tunk: A Lecture on Education” (Aug. 1906) and “O Southland!” (July 1907). Later, Johnson published two poems in the *Century*: “O Black and Unknown Bards” (Nov. 1908) and “Mother Night” (Feb. 1910). All of these poems were published without comment under the name “James W.



Johnson.” These were his first major publications as a poet and foreshadow the next era in his life as an author.

Authorship was on his mind during these years, both as a poet but also as the author of *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Johnson was conflicted about whether or not to publish the novel anonymously: “I turned over in my mind again and again my original idea of making the book anonymous” (*Along This Way* 238). When Johnson did publish the book anonymously, most readers and reviewers accepted it as a “human document”—a true autobiography. Johnson even planned for it to be taken as an autobiography and not a work of fiction: “I had done the book with the intention of its being so taken” (238). Interestingly, Johnson admits to getting “a certain pleasure out of anonymity, that no acknowledged book could have given me” (238). Johnson’s first published poems were small victories compared to his first popular work of prose, but he did not get personal recognition for the *Autobiography* until years later. Johnson did not identify himself as the author of the book, but his race was never in question either. As the 1910s began to unfold, then, his poetry—not his novel—solidified his identity as a new African-American writer. When “Fifty Years” and “Father, Father Abraham” were published in 1913, Johnson was placed before a national audience as an influential African-American poet.

His work as an activist for African-American causes also added to his authorial identity and reputation. With his work as a lawyer overseas and his position as the field secretary of the NAACP from roughly 1914 to 1930, Johnson had a broad viewpoint from which to look at the plight of African Americans in the U.S. The principal legacy of Johnson’s 14-year tenure with the NAACP was his fight against lynching: “The most

critical challenge Johnson faced...was the eradication of lynching, a goal that he called the saving of black America's bodies and white America's souls...Although Johnson never secured an anti-lynching bill, ...he presented to the American people the facts of the crime as they had never seen them before" (Wilson xviii). While Johnson was fighting against lynching in his work for the NAACP in 1919, he was also writing poetry, thinking about anthologies, and making literary and political appearances.<sup>30</sup>

After his earliest poems were published in *Century* and the *Independent* and his *Autobiography* was published, Johnson focused his literary efforts on putting together enough poetry for a book. Several of these poems were later published in the *Crisis*,<sup>31</sup> but his first big success—in fact, the poem that he was most well known for—was “Fifty Years,” published in the *New York Times* on Jan. 1, 1913, exactly fifty years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The poem later headlined Johnson's first book, *Fifty Years and Other Poems*, which was published in 1917. Reading the poem in the context of the other poems in this book provides a sense of the way Johnson approached his poetry and the “double audience.” The book contains two sections: the first has forty-three (mostly) lyrical poems, and the second includes sixteen “Jingles and Croons” written in dialect. The first ten poems in the first section forcefully take race as a

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<sup>30</sup> For example, the Dec. 1916 *Crisis* mentions the presence of Johnson, Braithwaite, and Du Bois at an event for “Negro Literature Week” in Philadelphia (91).

<sup>31</sup> The first poem Johnson had published in the *Crisis* was “Father, Father Abraham” (Feb. 1913). The poem was a tribute to Lincoln (written “On the Anniversary of Lincoln's Birth”). The page following the short five-stanza poem is an opinion piece that calls Johnson's “Fifty Years” both “long and interesting” and goes on to quote the last eight stanzas. Also included in this issue is a short biography of Johnson reporting that after he graduated from Atlanta University, “Together with his gifted brother, the musician, he came to New York and wrote the words to many a lilting song that set the world a-dancing. He then turned to more serious writing, studied at Columbia, and his work began to appear in the *Independent* and the *Century*” (172).

subject (like “To America” with the lines “How would you have us, as we are? / ...

Rising or falling? Men or things?”), but the next thirty-three poems (with a few exceptions) are more typically lyrical, taking love, beauty, and truth as their themes.<sup>32</sup>

Johnson’s “Fifty Years” appears first in the collection, and it tells us the most about him as a poet and an individual, especially in the early part of his career. The poem is an anthem for black progress that declares that Civil War soldiers did not die in vain, that shouts for justice, and that convinces readers that God would not bring his people so far for nothing. The poem begins by placing African Americans within a long lineage: “Just fifty years—a Winter’s day— / As runs the history of a race; / Yet, as we now look o’er the way, / How distant seems our starting-place!” (lines 5-8). The poem urges African Americans to think of themselves as part of a nation “that is ours by right of birth, / This land is ours by right of toil” (41-42). The poem also uses the flag as a symbol of African American military contribution: “We’ve helped to bear it, rent and torn, / Through many a hot-breath’d battle breeze; / Held in our hands, it has been borne / And planted far across the seas” (61-64).<sup>33</sup> After claiming African-American military contributions, the climax of the poem asks two questions:

Then should we speak but servile words,  
Or shall we hang our heads in shame?  
Stand back of new-come foreign hordes,  
And fear our heritage to claim? (69-72)

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<sup>32</sup> These poems with surprising topics are the exceptions to this rule: “The White Witch,” “Mother Night,” “Girl of Fifteen,” and “The Suicide.” Also, Johnson includes a narrative poem in six parts called “Down by the Carib Sea.” A few poems seem to be direct echoes of Braithwaite’s lyrical poems in *House of Falling Leaves*. For example, Johnson’s “The Awakening” uses similar imagery and diction as Braithwaite’s “Golden Hair,” mentioned above.

<sup>33</sup> He never departed from this motif of military contribution, and this part of the poem is reminiscent of “the most effective speech” of Johnson’s career, which he gave at Carnegie Hall (*Along This Way* 337).

The resounding answer is “No! Stand erect and without fear,” but the speaker also admits the tangible pain and hopelessness of African-American experience: “And yet, my brothers, well I know / The tethered feet, the pinioned wings” (77-78). After acknowledging the unjust place of blacks in society, the poem ends with exhortation and justification:

Courage! Look out, beyond, and see  
The far horizon’s beckoning span!  
Faith in your God-known destiny!  
We are part of some great plan.

That for which millions prayed and sighed,  
That for which tens of thousands fought,  
For which so many freely died,  
God cannot let it come to naught. (89-96)

The editor’s words before the poem in the *New York Times* say that the poem “voices the sentiments and the aspirations of [a] race,” and in it we see Johnson firmly situated as a race poet. Uncharacteristically for African-American poetry, “Fifty Years” first appeared before a large audience. In this case, the poem’s “seemingly unconflicted interpretative space” is complicated and highlighted before a large white audience, an event made possible only by the anniversary on which it was printed. In other words, the strong racial themes are acceptable because of their larger symbolic value to an apparently unified America.

Johnson’s unique experiences in literature and his civic career prepared him to write his most influential essay on black artistic production. In his preface to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson suggests that the anthology “has a direct bearing on the most vital of American problems” and that its contents could transform the way Americans think about race: “nothing will do more to change the mental attitude and

raise his status than a demonstration of the intellectual parity by the Negro through the production of literature and art” (vii). Though Johnson knows that a black writer feels a “pressure...to be propagandic” (xxxviii), he also hopes that African-American poets will be able to “work out a new and distinctive form of expression” (xli). For Johnson, this does not mean “that they should limit themselves to Negro poetry, to racial themes...; the sooner they are able to write *American* poetry spontaneously, the better” (xli-xlii, emphasis in original). Johnson uses McKay’s *Harlem Shadows* as an example of this primarily American poetry: “Mr. McKay gives evidence that he has passed beyond the danger which threatens many of the new Negro poets—the danger of allowing the purely polemical phases of the race problem to choke their sense of artistry” (xliii). In 1922, when he wrote this preface, Johnson was more interested in superseding the “double audience” and writing *American* poetry before treating racial themes overtly—a position that aligns him with Braithwaite.

At the beginning of the 1920s, both Braithwaite and Johnson believed in a kind of authentic artistic creation that attained to a universal ideal rather than a specific racial message, but this changed in their poetry and later criticism. After the Harlem Renaissance and the success of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson changed his mind about what African-American poetry should look like. These changes are most evident in his preface to the 1931 edition of his anthology:

I have no intention of depreciating the poetry not stimulated by a sense of race that Aframerican poets have written; much of it is as high as the average standard of American poetry and some of it is higher; but not in all of it do I find a single poem possessing the power and artistic finality found in the best of the poems rising out of racial conflict and contact. (7)

Because Johnson had become the accepted authority on African-American poetry by 1931, his opinions about African-American poetic production won out as the majority view, and his view anticipates the views of future African-American poets like those from the Black Arts Movement. Correspondingly, the waning influence of figures like Braithwaite shows that it was not possible to succeed literarily in the U.S if you did not want to identify and create art primarily as an African American.<sup>34</sup>

Though their early theories of African-American art diverged later in life, Braithwaite left an indelible mark on Johnson during the 1910s that culminates in his 1922 *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. When the two started collaborating in 1911, their relationship was businesslike (though this quickly changed as the decade progressed). The fact that Johnson wrote Braithwaite in 1911 shows that even by this early date his reputation as an expert poetry critic was strong and that his words held sway.<sup>35</sup> As literary editor of the *Crisis*, Braithwaite had presumably chosen the poems by Johnson that appeared in the magazine. Braithwaite also worked closely with Johnson to put out *Fifty Years and Other Poems* in 1917. By the end of the decade, Johnson called Braithwaite a “friend of poetry and poets” (*Book* xlii). In a more intimate statement

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<sup>34</sup> Letters between Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes vividly illustrate this point. In a 1962 letter responding to one in which Bontemps mentions that Toomer had “gone over entirely into the white...world,” Hughes commented, “Braithwaite did manage to do some criticism, didn’t he? But only by having all but his left heel over the white fence—and that had on a white sock” (437).

<sup>35</sup> In my reading of the archival materials, the earliest letter from Johnson to Braithwaite is dated July 27, 1911. The two were not familiar before this, because the letter was addressed to Braithwaite in care of the *Boston Transcript* and written from Corinto, Nicaragua, suggesting that they may not have met in person. Johnson wrote, “I have just learned that in a summary of the work of younger American poets in the magazines for the year 1911 you made mention of my verses in the *Century* entitled ‘Mother Night.’ If it is not too much trouble, would you be good enough to send me the clipping?” Special thanks to Emily Walhout at Harvard’s Houghton Library, who was kind enough to look through these letters and send me images for my research. (Full title and call number: Letters to WSB and other papers, bMS Am 1444.)

during the years leading up to *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson said that he and Braithwaite “had formed a close and helpful relationship” (*Along This Way* 336). Between Braithwaite’s untiring literary work in the 1910s and Johnson’s popular books in the 1920s, it is hard to find a more influential duo of African-American poets.

### **African Americans, Publishing, and New Verse Anthologies**

In 1917 Alice Corbin Henderson wrote a short essay for *Poetry* called “Poetry of the American Negro” that doubled as a review of Fenton Johnson’s third book, *Songs of the Soil*. She begins by explaining that the “negro” [sic] has “benefited very little, or been very little concerned individually with the achievements that bear the imprint of his race” (158). She then explains:

The reason is not far to seek. As soon as the negro is educated he begins to think the white man's thoughts, or to try to think them; it is impossible for him to do otherwise. But his emotional reactions, his religious feeling and his imagination are racially different from those of the white man, and if his art is to amount to anything he will have to seek to give expression to what is essentially his. But the negro poet has almost invariably echoed the white man's thought, the white man's vision of the negro. He has projected no new vision of himself. (158)

Up until this point, no African-American poets had been published in any of the popular poetry magazines of the day, and, unsurprisingly, this article about African-American poetry was without precedent in *Poetry*.<sup>36</sup> The fact that Henderson took the time to address African-American poetry at all shows that she and Harriet Monroe had noticed enough work by black authors to warrant comment and an editorial strategy. Their approach was to dictate what black poets were capable of and what their poetry should

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<sup>36</sup> The closest mention of African-American poetry would be Eunice Tietjens’s Oct. 1916 review in *Poetry* called “Southern Songs,” which describes the authenticity of white poet Ruth McEnery Stuart’s poem written from an African-American point of view: “Uncle Remus himself might have written the negro songs!” (55).

look like.<sup>37</sup> If the attitudes of editors towards and publishing opportunities for African Americans were this narrow in 1917, it is not hard to imagine why it was nearly impossible for black poets to publish in 1900 when Braithwaite was first trying to be published. As we will see, each of the first three decades of the twentieth century presented different challenges and slowly growing opportunities for African-American poets. Following a brief overview of the different purposes of anthologies in these decades (those that demonstrate a coherence of value, practice, venue, or culture), I will closely examine what was published during each decade to suggest what African-American poets were up against and ultimately show how the *New Verse* anthology created the most dynamic and influential space for their poetry.

After Dunbar's *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1896), African Americans published very little poetry during the first ten years of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, publishers were using anthologies to make money off of older, established poems. During this period, African Americans could be published in little magazines like the *Colored American Magazine* (which started in May of 1900 and ran through Dec. 1905) or less frequently in larger circulation little magazines like the *Century* or the *Independent*, provided the poetry was written in dialect.<sup>38</sup> Kinnamon accurately describes the situation

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<sup>37</sup> In her review of Fenton Johnson's poetry, Henderson said Johnson's "*Negro Spirituals*, written in the spirit of the genuine negro hymns and plantation folk-songs (not in dialect), have in them the germ of future development" (159). Having thus defined the acceptable technique for African-American poetry, *Poetry* published three "Negro Spirituals" in June 1918.

<sup>38</sup> James Weldon Johnson's "Sense You Went Away" (*Century*, Feb. 1900) and "Tunk: A Lecture on Education" (*Independent*, Aug. 1906) are examples of the kind dialect poetry that was acceptable. Johnson's "O Southland!" (*Independent*, July 1907) is the one exception to this rule that I have seen; it is a poem that implicitly argues for black subjects in the South and explicitly reminds Southerners "That he is strong who helps along the faint one at his side" (94).



when he says the period “was not a propitious time for the coming of age of a black writer” (43). Braithwaite’s publishing record during these years confirms how hard it was to be published. He wanted to start his own magazine and even wanted to create an African-American poetry anthology as early as 1906, but these projects came to naught.<sup>39</sup> The poetry anthologies that publishers would accept during these years—like Braithwaite’s *The Book of Elizabethan Verse* (1906)—were extensive anthologies covering a range of English poetry (like Stedman’s *An American Anthology*) or were gift anthologies (like the various reprints of Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury*). These kinds of anthologies—and indeed most anthologies from this decade—can best be characterized by a coherence of value. That value—for readers—was the cultural capital and apparent knowledge that came with owning all of the poetry of the English masters; additionally, the value—for publishers—was purely economic, making literature into a commodity for exchange. In both cases, the poetry anthology was a material object that was regarded more for its cultural and monetary value than its contents.

Braithwaite’s early publishing experiences in the first decade of the century convinced him of the power anthologies, and his early collections (and others) reveal the way poetry was appreciated for its ability to raise both cultural capital and money. Publishers valued poetry if it could be packaged for a purpose; magazine poetry, for

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<sup>39</sup> Even before this Braithwaite had the idea of collecting writing by African Americans since at least 1902 when he wrote a letter to Charles Chesnutt about starting “a magazine for the Negro in America” (“Charles W. Chesnutt”). Braithwaite described the project to Chesnutt: “there is a wealth of material among the colored writers in this country, and it is my aim that these, expressing their needs, ideals, and art through a Race organ, shall create a backbone for a negro school of writers in this country.” Though Chesnutt was cautiously optimistic about the idea, this project never came to fruition. The African American anthology did not happen either, though the idea stayed with Braithwaite.

instance, had no such purpose and was not valued.<sup>40</sup> In 1906, Braithwaite turned to the anthology form instead, and the *Book of Elizabethan Verse* came out in Boston and London, quickly selling through the first editions.<sup>41</sup> The anthology was typical of the time and was the first volume in a planned four-volume set, showing how comprehensiveness was highly sought after by readers.<sup>42</sup> The cover of the book was black with gold lettering and had a gold floral border surrounding the edges of the front cover. The title page suggests royal importance with its image of Whitehall Palace in 1590 (the home of the British Monarchy before most of it burned down in 1698). The introduction, written by the author and abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson, describes how the anthology suggests a coherence of value for readers, especially with respect to the gathering of knowledge: “This book furnishes, if I am not mistaken, the largest and therefore most valuable collection yet printed, on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. . . . [T]his alone should make it a work of much value” (ix).<sup>43</sup> Braithwaite’s introduction also mentions a similar kind of value that relates to the knowledge imparted at schools: “In the second edition of this Anthology the editor has availed himself of suggestions by the professors

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<sup>40</sup> Braithwaite came to the following conclusions about poetry in magazines as early as 1905: “Whether those poems are the best submitted for examination has always been and is now a very debatable question...the editor’s taste is fallible [and] the public’s taste is low by a preponderating percentage” (“Magazines” 16).

<sup>41</sup> The second edition of the *Book of Elizabethan Verse* appeared in May 1907. The London edition went into a second edition in 1908. With the success of the *Book of Elizabethan Verse*, Braithwaite must have been frustrated that he could not find a publisher for his book of African-American poetry but must also have been impressed with the power and popularity of the anthology form.

<sup>42</sup> The volumes were not carried through on a regular schedule and were printed by three different publishers: *The Book of Elizabethan Verse*, H.B. Turner & Co. 1906; *The Book of Georgian Verse*, Brentano’s 1908; *The Book of Restoration Verse*, Brentano’s 1909; and ten years later, *The Book of Modern British Verse*, Small, Maynard & Co. 1919. In 1910, Braithwaite organized *The Book of Victorian Verse*, but it was never published.

<sup>43</sup> The book was enormous, covering an expansive 823 pages.

of English in many of the leading universities which will tend to greatly increase its value” (xiii). As these quotations suggest, both the content and the printing itself show how editors and readers alike appreciated and consumed poetry—for its value as knowledge.

Book publishers of this era were also trying to make money off collections and anthologies, albeit in different ways. Novels were very popular at the time, but even these were sold as collections. In 1905, the W.H. White Company was marketing The Library of the World’s Famous Books to readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, who would have wanted unique books for their libraries. The company described the collection as being “considerably larger than the popular novel size” and said the collection “will be a credit to your library shelves—a happy medium between sumptuous de luxe volumes too rich and delicate to be handled and read, on the one hand, and the ordinary cloth book with all the attractiveness squeezed out of it for the sake of cheapening the price” (W. H. White). Another popular collection called The Loeb Classical Library came on the market in 1912: “a new, comprehensive and uniform series.” One reviewer describes how the wealthy might use the “library”: “the appearance of this library is one of the notable events of our day, and likely to be counted among the happiest uses of wealth” (Loeb). Confirming that anthologies had not changed much since the 1860s, the Jordan Marsh Company was selling gift editions of Francis Turner Palgrave’s 1861 *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*: “a new edition with 25 plates in color by leading artists, specially decorated end sheets, etc.” (Jordan). These “literary commodities,” as Braithwaite called them, were still coming out at the end of the decade, but new anthology forms were about to appear (“Another Year” 4).

As the second decade of the twentieth century began, both Braithwaite and Ezra Pound sensed the need for a new anthology form, a new medium to capture the changing perceptions and exigencies of poetry in the U.S.<sup>44</sup> Starting in 1913, Braithwaite and Pound both released New Verse anthologies, and though they had different approaches, both contained the newest poetry of the day.<sup>45</sup> Pound's methods in *Des Imagistes* demonstrate a coherence of practice (a group of poets purportedly writing with a new technique), while Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse* displays a coherence of venue (the best poetry published in reputable magazines). The 1910s, thanks in large part to Pound and Braithwaite, were a marked improvement for literary and poetic achievement, and the New Verse anthology form flourished. Even with these changes afoot, African Americans like Fenton Johnson and James Weldon Johnson generally did not see new publication opportunities—whether in anthologies or little magazines—until later in the decade.

From the time he started writing for the *Transcript* in Feb. 1906, Braithwaite examined a select number of magazines and made annual lists of the best poetry. More and more, readers began to rely on these reviews. On Dec. 11, 1912, Braithwaite wrote his last annual review that would appear without being supplemented in book form. It

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<sup>44</sup> The Modernist Journals Project published the 1910 Collection to document the period of cultural flux about which Virginia Woolf said, "on or about December 1910, human character changed." Of course, no time period is hermetically sealed; instead, literary movements and cultural changes overlap. For the present discussion, I will use the term "decades" for the sake of simplicity; however, we will assume the changes happening at the beginning and end of each decade encompass a number of years. In the present case, for example, Woolf mentions 1910, but Braithwaite's first *Anthology of Magazine Verse* and Johnson's "Fifty Years" were published in 1913.

<sup>45</sup> These approaches and the way Braithwaite's and Pound's collections were published were very different. Pound sent his verses off in a brown paper bag to have them accepted wholesale by Alfred Kreymborg's new magazine *Glebe* and published later in book form. Braithwaite had to self-publish his first volume and solicit help from his literary friends in Boston. Only after the anthology proved itself did a publisher pick it up the next year.

was called “Another Year of American Poetry in Review,” and in it he wrote that “Within a decade, I have watched the constant growth of public favor and appreciation of poetry and noted its gradual change from indifference to interest and support. So that there can be no doubt in the face of proofs that American poetic art has entered upon a new era” (4). When his first *Anthology of Magazine Verse* came out in book form in 1913, Braithwaite had combined his yearly lists of poetry with the anthology form with which he had been so successful in the past and thus produced a New Verse anthology. It was a struggle to organize and publish this new form, and the book’s meager existence (compared to his earlier expansive anthologies) is reflected in the material object. It was an unassuming, slim volume with a brown cover and a small sticker containing the title and Braithwaite’s name. The way Braithwaite organized the volume promoted poetry over poets: he did not include a contents list and printed the poems in seemingly random order. It is almost as if he did not want his readers to know how many and which poets were published in the volume; he may have wanted to keep readers from skipping around and to force them to read the whole book. In this way, Braithwaite brought readers into the editorial process by making them read all the poems and choosing their favorites.<sup>46</sup> He also included a list of all the poems published in his select list of magazines during the year, and the African-American poet James Corrothers’s poem “At the Closed Gate of Justice” appeared on the list.

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<sup>46</sup> Readers entered the editorial process in other ways too. In one particular edition of the book the owner pasted in newspaper clippings of poems. The poems that were pasted into this copy were “The Vision of Mary” by Katherine Tynan, “Robin’s Reproach” by J.H. Macnair, and “Christmas Carol” by Alfred Perceval Graves—none of which were featured in the anthology. This shows how important a collection of poems was; and that readers wanted to be a part of the collecting. Readers wanted to have a record of the new poetry all in one place, even if they had to do some of the work themselves. This copy resides at Fondren Library at Southern Methodist University (call number 810.81 B814).

While Braithwaite was making space for new American poetry in his *Anthology of Magazine Verse*, Fenton Johnson's publication record shows the hardships African-American authors faced during the 1910s. Johnson began writing poetry in his early twenties and came out with his first collection of poetry, *A Little Dreaming*, in 1913. This book was printed by the Peterson Linotyping Company in Chicago and copyrighted by Johnson himself, meaning that he could not find a publisher and paid for publication. He published *Visions of the Dusk* (1915) and *Songs of the Soil* (1916) in the same way, both works printed by Trachtenberg Company in New York City. After his third collection, he started two short-lived magazines: the *Champion* (1916) and the *Favorite* (1918). After all this time and effort, his poetry did not reach a larger market until 1918-19, when he started to write the kind of poetry that got him noticed by *Poetry* and *Others*. Based on the 1917 review of his book, it seems as though Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson told Johnson the kind of poetry they would accept, and he wrote it.<sup>47</sup> *Others* printed "Tired" in 1919, and though it is a secondary meaning, the poem can easily be read as a tale of African-American poetry publication. Johnson had been writing for years and must have been frustrated that no one had picked up his work. Similarly, the speaker could not be more frustrated or alienated: "I am tired of work; I am tired of building up someone else's civilization" (1). The speaker also feels the incredible pain and seeming pointlessness of being African American: "Throw the children into the river; civilization has given us too many. It is better to die than it is to grow up and find

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<sup>47</sup> *Poetry* had "received" Johnson's early books without any write up, reviewed *Songs of the Soil* (June 1917), and then published his "Three Negro Spirituals" in June 1918 because they were the kind of poetry Henderson had suggested in the 1917 review. Johnson's "Tired" was published in *Others* magazine in Jan. 1919. In the next issue (Feb. 1919), five other poems by Johnson were published, filling out his six-poem series called "African Nights" that would be published in its entirety in the *Others* anthology for 1919.

out you are colored” (6). By the end of the poem, “civilization” seems like an unreasonable and impossible construct for a black man. Fenton Johnson must have related to his speaker, because the “civilized” institutions of book publishing would not accept his work; despite their inherent value, he must have felt like throwing his manuscripts into the river.

About the time “Tired” was getting noticed, Fenton Johnson was put before a wide audience in Braithwaite’s 1919 *Victory! Celebrated by Thirty-Eight American Poets*. Braithwaite placed Johnson’s poem “The New Day” in the midst of work by thirty-seven white poets, and this editorial selection clearly shows Braithwaite’s ideas about racial issues. The introduction, written by President Theodore Roosevelt, emphasizes the credibility of this anthology.<sup>48</sup> The act of placing Johnson’s particular poem in the anthology is Braithwaite’s strongest move as an editor on behalf of African-American poets. The first half of the poem presents angels chanting about the pain of the war and how “Nevermore shall men know suffering, / Never more shall women wailing / Shake to grief the God of heaven” (30). The poem would have met the expectations of the anthology had it ended there; instead, the second half goes on to argue for the rights of African-American soldiers who lost their lives in the war. These lines starkly portray the segregated service of African Americans in the war:

Forget not, O my brothers, how we gave  
Red blood to save the freedom of the world!

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<sup>48</sup> Roosevelt’s introduction ended with this statement: “Let us brace ourselves with steel-hearted resolution and with serene wisdom to grapple with the vitally important problems of peace—just as, if necessary, we will grapple with the problems of war” (viii). This is probably not a direct comment about the problem of race in the U.S., but race is certainly one of the problems of peace for Roosevelt. After reading an early copy of James Weldon Johnson’s *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Roosevelt wrote: “Ugh! There is not any more puzzling problem in this country than the problem of color. It is not as urgent, or as menacing, as other problems, but it seems more utterly insoluble” (qtd. in Chakkalakal 533).

We were not free, our tawny hands were tied;  
 But Belgium's plight and Serbia's woes we shared  
 Each rise of sun or setting of the moon. [...]  
 For we have been with thee in No Man's Land,  
 Through lake and fire and down to Hell itself;  
 And now we ask of thee our liberty,  
 Our freedom in the land of Stars and Stripes. (31)

In presenting this poem, Braithwaite made a strong statement about race before a large white audience. In fact, given the context of a book composed mostly of white poets and introduced by Roosevelt, the statement would not have been much stronger had Braithwaite written the poem himself. And he would have stood strongly by his inclusion of the poem, since as Braithwaite said in another anthology from the same year, "What an editor includes...he will certainly not break faith with" ("Foreword" 7).

Another example that shows the experience of an African-American poet in this decade is James Weldon Johnson. He was a student of poetry publication throughout the 1910s, and he learned the affordances of various mediums when he saw his poem "The White Witch" published in four different places. Also, Braithwaite's influence on Johnson during this time cannot be overstated because all his poetic opportunities came through Braithwaite as editor at the *Crisis*, his annual anthologies, and his Cornhill Publishing.<sup>49</sup> The multiple pages on which Johnson's poem "The White Witch" appear present distinct meanings as it was published in four places over a period of years: the *Crisis* in 1915, *Anthology of Magazine Verse* in 1915, *Fifty Years and Other Poems* in

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<sup>49</sup> After "The White Witch" was published in Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915*, the *Crisis* printed this comment in January 1916: "The Boston *Transcript* of November 30th says of Mr. Braithwaite: 'He has helped poetry to readers as well as to poets. One is guilty of no extravagance in saying that the poets we have...and the gathering deference we pay them, are created largely out of the stubborn, self-effacing enthusiasm of this one man...Very much by his toil they may write, and be read. Not one of them will ever write a finer poem than Braithwaite himself has lived already'" ("Along the Color Line" 111).



1917, and finally in the *Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1922 (not to mention the revised edition of this book in 1931 and many reprints afterwards). George Bornstein reminds us that “any material page on which we read any poem is a constructed object that will encode certain meanings even while placing others under erasure” (*Material* 31). Johnson watched various meanings become encoded and others erased as his poem appeared in different venues, and all the while he was internalizing new editing methods that necessarily inform his work as an editor in the 1920s.

Johnson’s poem first appeared in March 1915 in the *Crisis*, and it is presented on one full page in two columns. The title is printed in all capital letters, and Johnson’s full name is printed directly below this (also in all capital letters). These bibliographic details give unusual weight to the poem, because the *Crisis* often printed short poems at the ends of pages.<sup>50</sup> The meaning that the poem communicates in this first printing is probably the most powerful of any to come, even in Johnson’s own anthology. The *Crisis* presents the poem directly in the middle of an array of conversations going on in the black community, which include actual enemies to avoid at risk of death. In this issue alone, there is an opinion piece about lynching, a short editorial called “To Our Young Poets,” and a short piece called “The White Christ” about the “contortions” of Billy Sunday.<sup>51</sup> In

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<sup>50</sup> A few poems receive the honor of a full page; two examples are Johnson’s “Father Abraham” (Feb. 1913) and Braithwaite’s “Scintilla” and “Laughing it Out” in the Easter Number (Apr. 1915). Most of the other poems printed in 1915 only take up parts of pages, and some issues do not even contain poetry.

<sup>51</sup> The lynching piece, titled “Lynching: Southern Chivalry,” is a compilation (largely without comment) of gruesome quotations about recent lynchings from seventeen magazines in the North and some from the South (225). The editorial “To Our Young Poets” instructs: “To know what poetry is, read poetry” (236). It also suggests they read Palgrave’s *Golden Treasury of English Poetry*, Max Eastman’s *Enjoyment of Poetry*, and Braithwaite’s *Anthology of Magazine Verse, 1914*. Finally, the piece directly before Johnson’s poem, “The White Christ,” describes Billy Sunday’s revivals, and suggests that “hereafter let no white man sneer at the medicine men of West Africa or the howling of the Negro revival. The Negro church is at least democratic. It welcomes everybody. It draws no color line” (238).

particular, the article about lynching incites fear and anger and creates a very tangible context for reading the first lines of Johnson's poem:

O, brothers mine, take care! Take care!  
 The great white witch rides out to-night,  
 Trust not your prowess nor your strength;  
 Your only safety lies in flight;  
 For in her glance there is a snare,  
 And in her smile there is a blight. (1-6)

The urgency of the repeated exclamations seems fitting in the *Crisis*, where a warning like this could be taken literally.

Even though it came two years later, the meaning remains largely the same in Johnson's *Fifty Years and Other Poems*. "The White Witch" is printed directly after the first ten poems on racial themes and therefore urgently warns African Americans about becoming too familiar with white people in general and white women in particular. The poem "Fragment" is printed before "The White Witch" and provides context from African-American history:

A wedge so slender at the start—  
 Just twenty slaves in shackles bound—  
 And yet, which split the land apart  
 With shrieks of war and battle sound,  
 Which pierced the nation's very heart,  
 And still lies cankering in the wound. (17-18)

African Americans had to deal with old, "cankering" wounds and fresh, new wounds that were being regularly inflicted. "Fragment" therefore prepares the reader for the first line of "The White Witch" in much the same way the *Crisis* context does; it is a strong warning to avoid the dangerous white people who are near at hand and who have recently carried out very real violence.

When Johnson's poem was published in Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915*, it appeared before its first large and generally white audience. In this instantiation, the poem carries a very different meaning, and many of the racial exigencies are erased. This happens because the poem is placed in the middle of a lively group of burgeoning modern poets. Instead of being surrounded by editorials about lynching and advice to African-American poets, the poem finds itself surrounded by the poems of seventy-two white poets. The *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1915* was published when Braithwaite's influence was stronger than it had ever been before, and this is the first annual anthology that he did not have to publish himself.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the collection includes a large number of important modern American poets: Robert Frost, Amy Lowell, Wallace Stevens, H.D., Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and even his rival Harriet Monroe. Braithwaite selected many of what would become the famous poems of the modern era.<sup>53</sup> This anthology marks the apex of his editorial acumen and prescience.<sup>54</sup> The inclusion of Johnson's poem in such a

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<sup>52</sup> The *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1913* and the *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1914* were both edited by and issued by William Stanley Braithwaite (Cambridge). The 1915 anthology was issued by Gomme & Marshall (New York). The remaining publishers were: L.V. Gomme (New York, 1916), Small, Maynard (Boston, 1917-22), B.J. Brimmer (Boston, 1923-27), H. Vinal (New York, 1928), G. Sully & Co. (New York, 1929) (Hutchinson, *Harlem* 513).

<sup>53</sup> For example, Frost's "Birches," "The Road Not Taken," and "The Death of a Hired Man" (the first two published in the *Atlantic Monthly* and the latter in the *New Republic*); Lowell's "Patterns" and "Bombardment" (published in the *Little Review* and *Poetry*, respectively); Stevens's "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (published in *Others*); and two representative poems—"Washington McNeely" and "Hannah Armstrong"—from Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* (published in *Reedy's Mirror*). In April 1915, H.D.'s "Sea Iris" and Lowell's "The Bombardment" were also published in the first *Some Imagist Poets*. It should also be pointed out that Frost and Masters both received generous mention for their books of poetry that came out in 1915, largely as a result of meeting with Braithwaite in Boston and discussing their poetry with him.

<sup>54</sup> Hutchinson explains how Braithwaite's position in American letters came to be sadly ironic: "After helping to make a way for poetic modernism in the United States, he found himself awash in its wake by the 1920s, a figure by then of marginal importance even to New Negro writers who had once admired and learned from him" (*Harlem* 349).

strong anthology represents the first example of an African-American poet being showcased with a group of modern poets. Because Johnson's poem appears without comment, his poem and his place as a poet is a mystery. In fact, the only bibliographic clue associated with Johnson's poem is the designation "*Crisis*" to the left of his name after the poem. Johnson's poem, then, possesses what Braithwaite, in the introduction to the anthology, calls "a touch of mystery that comes creeping out of the shadow into the sunlight" (xii).<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, the poem takes on completely new meanings in this anthology because of the poems printed before and after it. A short poem called "The Answer," by Sara Teasdale (a popular poet who was appearing in many magazines at the time), preceded "The White Witch." Her poem discusses death in a way that highlights her passion for life but also brings the speaker's body and even skin color to mind: "When I go back to earth / And all my joyous body / Puts off the red and white / That once had been so proud" (1-4). After the poem, Braithwaite includes her name, a space below that, and then Johnson's title: "THE WHITE WITCH." For some reason, the words "WHITE" and "WITCH" are slightly darker and more pronounced than the word "THE."<sup>56</sup> This printing oddity emphasizes the whiteness of the witch but also connects to the word "white" printed in Teasdale's poem only fourteen lines earlier. (The "red" in Teasdale's poem also pre-echoes the "red lips" in Johnson's poem). This unique presentation makes the

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<sup>55</sup> In fact, Braithwaite marks Johnson's poem with an asterisk that denotes "the poems of distinction in the magazines"—only a few poems of the hundreds printed during the year received asterisks.

<sup>56</sup> This is true in each of the three copies I referenced (all available on the Internet Archive): University of California Libraries (inscribed by Harold Monroe), Stanford University (digitized by Google), and University of Virginia (digitized by Google).

first line, “O, brothers mine, take care! Take care!” seem to be a plea from the speaker of the previous poem, presumably a white woman to a white man. The racial element of Johnson’s poem is at the very least confused if not lost altogether. In this context, Johnson’s poem can be read as purely sexual (“And I have kissed her red, red lips / And cruel face so white and fair”) or mystical (“Unnumbered centuries are hers / The infant planets saw her birth”). And though the next poem, “The Vanished Country,” by Grantland Rice, has a light, nostalgic tone, it too mentions a (presumably) white girl with hair “like the sundrift / From the heart of summer skies” (163). The context of Johnson’s poem actually distracts the reader from the racial meaning of the poem, even while giving it a larger audience. The poem’s beauty remains nonetheless, and Johnson’s name began to register with readers of poetry.

Finally, the poem finds new meanings in *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. Johnson’s anthology softens the blow of those first lines somewhat because Johnson selected “O Black and Unknown Bards” to begin his section of the anthology. This poem asks the singers of ancient spirituals “How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?” and ends by saying “You sang a race from wood and stone to Christ” (73-74). Similarly, the poem directly before “The White Witch” is Johnson’s famous “The Creation: A Negro Sermon,” which later inspired the other poems in his *God’s Trombones*. The poem ends with God breathing life into Adam (the “lump of clay”): “Then into it He blew the breath of life, / And man became a living soul. / Amen. Amen” (79). These two poems can be described as devotional, making the first lines of “The White Witch” hold a new meaning that invokes Christian brotherhood and makes the witch into a kind of spiritual being, perhaps a demon or a symbol of fleshly desire. Having seen the poem in its earlier

instantiations, it seems clear from this selection in his 1922 anthology (and also the 1931 edition) that Johnson believed the message of the poem should be fluid; he must have embraced the fact that the best poems can be read in multiple ways.

Given these four different perspectives, the most common readings of the poem are helpfully interrogated. The poem fluctuates between general racial restraint and what was seen as sexual deviance. The sexualized reading is the most obvious reading, as Felipe Smith writes: “The witch parodies [American] ‘Liberty’ by sneering at the greatest of white-world social taboos, interracial sex.” The poem can also be read as an allegorical warning to African Americans to be wary of the U.S. in general, as Smith also explains: “The white witch, siren of false hopes, projection of internalized self-doubt, blocks the advance of the black male into American national subjecthood.” Irrespective of what reading Johnson may have originally intended, he certainly noticed how his poem looked differently in various venues. All of these publishing experiences—whether in a little magazine, an anthology, or his own book of poetry—prepared him for making his own editorial decisions and meanings when he edited his own anthology.

Starting in late 1922 and early 1923, another general cultural shift began to take place, changing the possibilities of the New Verse anthology as well as publishing opportunities for African Americans. Two of the iconic books of this time were T.S. Eliot’s 1922 *The Waste Land* and Jean Toomer’s 1923 *Cane*.<sup>57</sup> The New York publishers Boni and Liveright published both of these works—easily the two most significant books of the decade if not the century. Pericles Lewis pronounces this era of “high modernism”

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<sup>57</sup> *The Waste Land* was first published in the *Criterion* (Oct. 1922), then in the *Dial* (Nov. 1922), and in book form by Boni and Liveright (Dec. 1922). *Cane* was first published by Boni and Liveright in Sept. 1923.

as the “the decade of modernism’s greatest achievements” (125). Hutchinson describes the decade for African American artists by saying there was a “general cultural awakening and moment of recognition—both self-recognition...and recognition from ‘without’” (“Introduction” 2). James Weldon Johnson’s 1922 *The Book of American Negro Poetry* was a conduit for these kinds of recognition, and the collection was a New Verse anthology that demonstrated a coherence of culture—the culture of a marginalized people. *The Book of American Negro Poetry* is a New Verse anthology not because it collects the most recent or experimental poetry but because it is a platform for African-American poets who have never had a large audience; this reality makes their poetry new. Johnson explains in his preface: “The public, generally speaking, does not know that there are American Negro poets—to supply this lack of information is, alone, a work worthy of somebody's effort” (vii). African-American poetry, other than Dunbar’s, had never had any circulation to speak of, let alone the wide circulation that Johnson’s anthology would attain. Johnson’s anthology had the ability to unite and inspire a culture.

After Braithwaite and Johnson’s collaboration of the 1910s, the two began having conversations about the possibility of putting out an anthology. Johnson wanted to publish an anthology for use in high schools, but Braithwaite did not seem interested at the time. The most obvious reason for this was Braithwaite’s busyness; he had more editorial responsibilities in these years than any other time in his career. In the time since he published Johnson’s *Fifty Years and Other Poems* at Cornhill in 1917 to the end of 1919, Braithwaite released seven anthologies, published a number of other authors

through Cornhill, and continued working at the *Transcript*.<sup>58</sup> In fact, the combination of Braithwaite's busyness and Johnson's desire to put out an anthology led Braithwaite to give Johnson his idea for putting together an anthology of African-American poetry—an idea he had over thirteen years earlier. In 1953, Braithwaite explained the situation:

Thirty years ago I conceived the idea of summing up the Negro's contributions to American poetry in an anthology. It was a work that needed to be done, but I could not at the time undertake it, and so told James Weldon Johnson about it and urged him to do it. He produced *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, which was successful, and was the first of some half dozen anthologies of the kind successfully published. ("Letter to Benjamin W. Huebsch")

This claim is also substantiated in a letter from Alain Locke to his patron Charlotte Mason on 25 Feb. 1931. He describes how Braithwaite and Johnson had worked together on *The Book of American Negro Poetry*: "The bitter irony of the situation is to see James Weldon Johnson profiteering while Braithwaite starves—though B. [gave] J.W.J. his start—Did you know that J.W.J.'s Anthology of Negro Poetry [sic] was B's idea given to him—and worked out and criticized over a period of 18 months?" (Locke "Letter to

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<sup>58</sup> Johnson's *Fifty Years* came out in 1917 and was rereleased in 1921. Cornhill also published Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* in 1917 and Joseph F. Cotter's *The Band of Gideon and Other Lyrics* in 1918. The *Anthology of Magazine Verse* for 1917, 1918, and 1919 came out on schedule and were some of Braithwaite's longest collections to date. He published *The Poetic Year* in 1917, *The Golden Treasury of Magazine Verse* in 1918, *Victory! Celebrated by Thirty-Eight American Poets* in 1919, *The Book of Modern British Verse* in 1919, and *The Story of the Great War* (a remarkable 371 pages of prose) in 1919. In 1918, he was honored with two honorary degrees and also awarded the NAACP Spingarn Medal for "the American citizen of African descent who made last year the highest achievement in any field of elevated or honorable human endeavor" (50). After these impressively productive years, Braithwaite did not publish much of note during the 1920s (except the annual anthology); his influence was disappearing. In 1921 he hit rock bottom ("the bad set back of 1921") and later said that he "knew it was suicide to expect to pull up again with the pen" ("Letter to Alain Locke"). It is unclear what happened in 1921, but the "set back" certainly had something to do with the (probably unprofitable) sale of Cornhill. After this, Braithwaite founded another struggling publishing company called B.J. Brimmer and was editor-in-chief until he sold it to his partner in 1925.



Charlotte Mason”)<sup>59</sup> The act of offering his anthology to Johnson may have been the worst decision of Braithwaite’s career—both for his reputation and his pocketbook. His many projects probably gave him a feeling of satisfaction and financial security that led him to hand over the most important and most popular book of African-American poetry in the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup>

When the idea was transferred to Johnson as the 1920s began, he too was busy—both literarily and politically. While he was editing *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, he was also meeting with politicians to help bring the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill before Congress (though it was tabled and never passed).<sup>61</sup> In his autobiography, Johnson describes this time in his life and his ideas for the anthology:

I had little time and less energy for creative writing, but in 1921 I began work on an anthology of poetry by American Negroes. My original idea was extremely modest; I planned to start with Paul Laurence Dunbar and sift the work of all Negro poets from him down to Claude McKay and his contemporaries, with a view to publishing in a small volume thirty or forty of the poems that I judge to be up to a certain standard. . . . *The Book of American Negro Poetry* was published early in 1922. (*Along This Way* 374-75)

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<sup>59</sup> In addition to what is quoted above, Locke continued: “I have been to Johnson once before in Braithwaite’s interest—but this time I’ll write a letter—and keep a copy—I think an adroit reference to these facts which he knows I know will fetch him—if put in writing.” Earlier in the letter, Locke was also thinking about trying “to see if Fisk or Atlanta can offer [Braithwaite] a temporary lectureship.” It turns out that Locke must have in fact written this letter to Johnson because Braithwaite later received a position at Atlanta University “through the intervention of Johnson” (Szefer, “Beauty” 579). Special thanks to Dr. Kenvi Phillips from the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center at Howard University, who sent a copy of this letter to me.

<sup>60</sup> It is also possible that Braithwaite might have wanted to distance himself from the anthology because, as he said in his autobiography, it might be “appraised and judged by a different standard than the literature of American writers in general” (Butcher 178).

<sup>61</sup> Johnson mentions meeting with Senator H.C. Lodge, Senator James E. Watson, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (Sec. of the Navy 1921-24), and even President Calvin Coolidge (who was in office 1923-29). After a short conversation with Coolidge, Johnson wrote: “It was clear that Mr. Coolidge knew absolutely nothing about the colored people” (*Along This Way* 371-74).

After the book was published, Johnson moved out from under Braithwaite's mentorship into a time of his own literary flourishing. Johnson does not give Braithwaite credit for the idea of the anthology, but he does mention him in the preface in such a significant way as to suggest the high level of help Braithwaite had given Johnson: "It is a recognized fact that in the work which preceded the present revival of poetry in the United States, no one rendered more unremitting and valuable service than Mr. Braithwaite. And it can be said that no future study of American poetry of this age can be made without reference to Braithwaite" (xlii). Their mentorship was over, and Johnson took a prominent place in what he called the "Negro 'literary revival'" (*Along This Way* 376).

The bibliographic details of *The Book of American Negro Poetry*—from the long preface to the author biographies—demonstrate that the anthology is an attempt at creating credibility and authority for African-American poets and poetry (not to mention Johnson himself).<sup>62</sup> The backside of the original dust cover advertised a list of current anthologies for sale under the title "Unusual Collections of Modern Writing."<sup>63</sup> Though the publishers were probably trying to get attention with this designation, the presentation makes the book seem almost outlandish. The title page is simple and shows how Johnson's literary reputation had yet to be made, describing him only as the author of *Fifty Years and Other Poems*.

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<sup>62</sup> One can see that this credibility was needed, because no one reviewed the book except Jessie Fauset in the *Crisis* for June 1922. She writes: "This anthology itself has the value of an arrow pointing the direction of Negro genius. . . . What is still more important is the possession on the part of the Negro of what Mr. Johnson calls a 'transfusive quality,' that is the ability to adopt the original spirit of his milieu into something artistic and original, which yet possesses the note of universal appeal" (66).

<sup>63</sup> This copy resides at the University of California at Berkeley (call number: PS 591 N4 J6) and is available online at the Internet Archive.

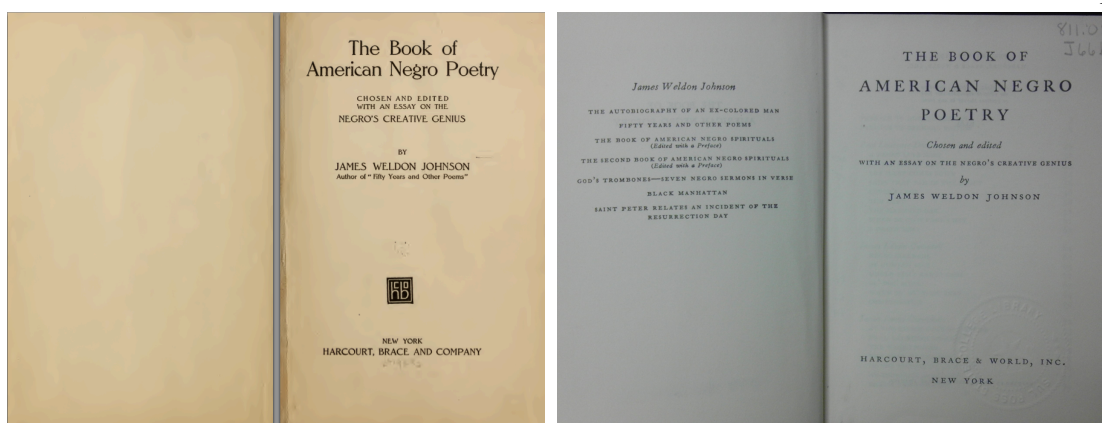


Figure 14. Two editions of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922 and 1931). The 1922 edition (Library of Congress, via the Internet Archive) and the 1931 edition (from SUL Ross Library), respectively.

When compared to the title page of the 1931 version, which lists seven publications on the facing page, it becomes clear how much Johnson's reputation would grow in the decade after the first edition (see Figure 14).<sup>64</sup>

Another editorial decision that affects the interpretation of poems and the authority of the anthology as a whole is the placement of the poems on the page. Johnson gives each poem a full page and chooses not to begin a new poem until the next page, even if the same author writes the poem. This means that a short twelve-line poem like Dunbar's "The Debt" gets a whole page, even though the bulk of the page is taken up by white space. Johnson also chose to put extra blank pages between poets and sections. After Lucian B. Watkins's four-line poem "To Our Friends," for instance, not only the remainder of the page is blank but also the next page, before Benjamin Brawley's poems

<sup>64</sup> The listed works include: *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, *Fifty Years and Other Poems*, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, *The Second Book of American Negro Spirituals*, *God's Trombones—Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, *Black Manhattan*, and *Saint Peter Relates an Incident of the Resurrection Day*.

begin. Each of these decisions made for a longer anthology that shows a desire to build the authority and credibility of African-American poets.

*The Book of American Negro Poetry* went through two editions while Johnson was alive, and the differences between the two are substantial—showing how much the first anthology had done for African-American poetry in a little less than ten years. The preface to the second edition rightly remarks that many of the “modest” claims of the long preface to the first edition had by 1931 become “accepted facts” and “more or less canonical” (3). Johnson also mentions that in the nearly ten years since it was published, “there has grown a general recognition that the Negro is a contributor to American life not only of material but of artistic, cultural, and spiritual values; that in the making and shaping of American civilization, he is an active force, a giver as well as a receiver, a creator as well as a creature” (30). Johnson’s words do not ask for recognition: they assume it has been given. Even the construction of the 1931 edition exudes authority, and this is most evident from the compact size of the book.<sup>65</sup> Even though it is substantially longer due to the addition of poets, poems, and long poet bios,<sup>66</sup> there is no extra white space between poems, and the factory-cut pages, replacing the rough edges of the first edition, give it the feel of a modern book. The 1931 edition also projects authority because of the poets Johnson includes. Seven poets were added to the second edition, and the book appeals to the authority of the most “preeminent figures in this younger group”:

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<sup>65</sup> The 1931 edition is a full centimeter smaller, and the spine is thinner despite eighty-three more pages.

<sup>66</sup> The 1931 edition includes 40 poets and adds longer comments before their poems. Johnson writes the “sketches of the poets included have been made critical as well as biographical” (8). Johnson also asked Sterling Brown, then professor at Howard University, to write a companion volume to be used in schools called *Outline for the Study of the Poetry of American Negroes* (1931). Tellingly, this invitation came at the same time that Locke must have asked Johnson to help Braithwaite; whatever the case was, it is clear that Braithwaite and Johnson were no longer close collaborators.

Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes (5). The tone of the preface and the bibliographic details of the book itself make the 1931 edition communicate a confidence that is altogether missing in the first edition. There is an aura of power. African-American artists had found their collective voice and the recognition they had wanted for so long. In a very real sense, people had noticed Johnson's anthology.<sup>67</sup>

One of the most telling changes in the 1931 edition was the way Johnson selected and organized his own poems: he was organizing his legacy. In the first edition he was establishing himself as a leader, and in the second edition, he was making a final statement about the leadership role he had undeniably attained. Johnson conspicuously reordered what he saw as the most important poems, replaced two poems with more recent selections, and added "The Glory of the Day Was in Her Face" from his 1917 collection *Fifty Years*.<sup>68</sup> Johnson had not only fully settled into his literary identity in 1931 but also was an example to younger poets. These poems demonstrate how the African-American circle of poets Johnson was a part of had evolved in the 1920s. The poems that Johnson adds are comprehensive, showing all of the modes in which he had written over the years. The best example is his replacement of his early sonnet "Mother Night" with the later sonnet "My City." This change signifies the enormous change he

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<sup>67</sup> Two tangible examples include, first, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which supported Johnson with a fellowship while he made the additions to the 1931 edition. Second, Georgia Douglass Johnson wrote to tell Johnson what a great reputation the edition had in Washington: "I predict great success for it. Even now, it occupies the very center place in Pearman's [store] window across the street from the Labor Department where I work."

<sup>68</sup> In one copy of the 1931 text, three of Johnson's poems are ripped out of the book: "The White Witch," "Sense You Went Away," and "O Black and Unknown Bards." The poems seem to have been removed by a library patron, almost as if the reader removed the most important poems for future use. This is a distinct possibility because the book was at one time used as a reference book that could not be taken out of the library. This copy resides at the SUL Ross Library in Alpine, TX (call number: 811.08 J66B).

went through from 1910 and 1931 but also his strong connection to New York.

“Mother Night” and “My City” are startlingly similar for poems written over two decades apart. They are both sonnets that address the end of life, but they come to different conclusions. The earlier “Mother Night” embraces death “without fear or doubt” and finds comfort in the “quite bosom of the Night” (12, 14). Johnson’s speaker longs for a quiet darkness, an end to the “feverish light” of life on earth. In 1931, at the age of sixty, Johnson is inspired by a different muse and does not long for silence or escape. Instead, the speaker in the later poem believes that the “keenest loss” of death will be the loss of his Manhattan: “O God! the stark, unutterable pity, / To be dead, and never again behold my city!” (3, 13-14). Having roamed the world until middle age, Johnson was finally rooted in New York, and he found the “throbbing force, the thrill that comes” from being a “part” of Manhattan one of the most significant parts of his life.<sup>69</sup> His life experiences in literature and in the black community made him value the newer sonnet because it communicates the kind of community he had found—the kind of community *The Book of American Negro Poetry* had helped bring about.

*The Book of American Negro Poetry* inspired a number of other African-American poetry anthologies in the first twenty years after it came out, not to mention the many anthologies that came later.<sup>70</sup> In 1925, two anthologies came out that could not but have relied on Johnson’s anthology: Lena Beatrice Morton Johnson’s *Negro Poetry in America* and Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (a compilation of poetry, prose, and

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<sup>69</sup> Johnson had just published the influential history of the 1920s called *Black Manhattan* (1930) before the this second edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* was published in 1931.

<sup>70</sup> The following list does not include anthologies of African-American poetry collected by white writers, which were also popular. See Kerlin, White, Wood, and Eleazar.

drama).<sup>71</sup> In 1927, Countee Cullen published *Caroling Dusk*, which went into two editions and was dedicated to Braithwaite, “whom those who know him delight to honor.” After working closely with Johnson on the second edition of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* in 1931, Sterling Brown came out with two collections: *Negro Poetry and Drama* (1937) and *The Negro Caravan* (1941). Johnson’s book was a tour de force, and the collection is arguably as influential as a book like *Cane*.<sup>72</sup> It is easy to see that the African-American New Verse anthology, as a form, and not individual poetry collections or little magazines, was easily the most pivotal and influential medium to transmit African-American poetry.

The cultural significance of Johnson’s anthology in the U.S. cannot be underestimated. Bornstein writes, “In the case of poetry anthologies, the meanings foregrounded are ‘aesthetic’ and those erased tend to be historical and political” (*Material* 31). This is certainly true of Braithwaite’s *Anthology of Magazine Verse* (as we saw from the lost meanings in his publication of “The White Witch”), but it is not the case with Johnson’s *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. Though Johnson’s book may erase some of the original political and historical situations, the book re-inscribes the poems within a specific political and historical movement, giving them new and often

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<sup>71</sup> This collection included thirty-four poems by ten poets of the decade: Cullen, McKay, Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Hughes, Bontemps, Georgia Douglass Johnson, Anne Spencer, Angelina Grimke, and Lewis Alexander.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson’s seminal anthology was reprinted at least six times. The anthologies that came after varied in significance but find their roots in Johnson’s book. *The New Negro* came out in two editions and was reprinted at least 14 times. *Caroling Dusk* came out in two editions and was reprinted at least six times. *Negro Poetry and Drama* was reprinted twice. *Negro Caravan* was reprinted five times. This is a total of eight editions and thirty-two reprints. *Cane* came out in eight editions and was reprinted twenty times. These numbers only include books that first came out from 1922-42 and do not take into account later anthologies like Hughes’s and Bontemps’s, which I discuss in the conclusion to this chapter. Additionally, there were a few lesser-known anthologies I do not take into account: the 1932 *Favorite Poems by Negro Poets* and the 1937 *An Anthology of Negro Poetry by Negroes and Others*.

more powerful political meanings than ever before. Because of this coherence of culture, Johnson's *Book of American Negro Poetry* was not only the most influential New Verse anthology early on but also during the entire twentieth century.<sup>73</sup> It is no wonder that, as Eugene Levy has said, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* "helped to give an identity to the 'New Negro' movement." And that movement helped bring African Americans into a new era of democratic citizenship.

### Conclusion

In 1949, Arna Bontemps and Langston Hughes published *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949*, and as they prepared the volume, they self-consciously considered previous anthologies and editors like Braithwaite and Johnson. Hughes and Bontemps deliberately built upon and departed from the work of their predecessors, whom they called "oldsters" and "old timers" (Bontemps 239, 248). One example of Bontemps and Hughes negotiating their place in relation to their predecessors occurred when they were discussing the title for a new anthology of "Negro Folklore." They discussed the possibility of putting the word "book" at the beginning of the title, and Bontemps pointed out that "James Weldon Johnson used that adjective so conspicuously in his several 'Books' (American Negro Poetry, American Negro Spirituals) ours might get mixed up with his—or at least seem to lean a bit too heavily on his titles" (353-54). This comment shows, first, how Johnson's anthology was much more memorable than Braithwaite's

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<sup>73</sup> Of all the New Verse anthologies I've researched, Harriet Monroe's *The New Poetry* and Johnson's *The Book of American Negro Poetry* were the most popular and reached the largest audiences. Monroe's collection went into three editions and was reprinted many times (according to WorldCat, a total of fifty-seven editions and reprints). *Johnson's* book went through two major editions and was reprinted at least six times (a total of seventy hits on WorldCat). Even though the numbers are relatively close, Johnson's book is still relevant today, boasting fourteen reprint editions in the last twenty years. (The most recent reprint of Monroe's collection was in 1947.)



four anthologies whose titles begin with the word “Book.”<sup>74</sup> Second, Bontemps’s remark makes clear that he and Hughes did not want to be seen as following their predecessors too closely but instead wanted to make new and original contributions. Bontemps and Hughes also saw themselves as cultural spokesmen. One year after Johnson’s death, Hughes identified Bontemps as a new cultural leader and said that he should “take the place of the late James Weldon in spreading culture”; Hughes even suggests that Bontemps could go “one better” by giving lectures with living writers (45). Finally, the two believed that their work as poets and editors was answering the call Johnson gave in his influential book *Negro Americans, What Now?* Bontemps said, “If 10,000 Negroes are now buying books, we are entering the era we started crying for back in the Harlem days. . . . Remember that you and I have helped to bring it about!” (430). Bontemps and Hughes saw themselves as the leaders Johnson was calling for in his book, and their anthology is an extension of their years of literary work and their direct connection to previous African-American critics and editors.<sup>75</sup>

Their debt to Braithwaite and Johnson is also evident in their anthology. In it Bontemps and Hughes hoped to collect an evocative and unique sampling of the poetry written by the “Negro”: “On the whole the aim was to assemble selections which would be at once representative of the Negro’s own poetic expression and of the poetry he inspired others to write” (viii). To do this, their collection is separated into three sections: “Negro Poets of the U.S.A.,” “Tributary Poems by Non-Negroes,” and “The Caribbean.”

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<sup>74</sup> *The Book of Elizabethan Verse* (1906), *The Book of Georgian Verse* (1908), *The Book of Restoration Verse* (1909), and *The Book of Modern British Verse* (1919).

<sup>75</sup> Robert E. Park reviewed Johnson’s *Negro Americans, What Now?* in 1935. Park believed Johnson wanted “a board of strategy to advise, direct, and as far as possible co-ordinate, the operations” of the “Negro people” (837).

The first section is by far the largest (containing sixty-six poets and 230 poems), while the second section contains thirty-nine poets and forty-eight poems. The third section (containing forty-one poets and eighty-three poems) is further organized by country.<sup>76</sup> The poems they include by Braithwaite and Johnson show a familiarity with their work and indicate their attitude towards each man. Braithwaite is grouped with Dunbar, and Bontemps and Hughes include two poems from his 1907 *House of Falling Leaves* and two from his then recently released collection *Selected Poems* (1948).<sup>77</sup> These selections are bookends to Braithwaite's career and suggest that he was seen by Bontemps and Hughes more as an important literary figure of the past than an active poet. The choices they made about which of Johnson's poems to include are much more telling, however. Most of poems they chose for the anthology were already anthologized by Johnson in the 1931 *The Book of American Negro Poetry*. These generous selections are an obvious nod to Johnson's anthology and show that he is seen as both an important literary figure and an important poet. Bontemps and Hughes agree with Johnson's conception of his best poems, and their selections are a tribute to his work and a sign of their respect for Johnson's critical eye.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, Bontemps and Hughes carry on the same conversation about the role and responsibility of African-American poets that Braithwaite and Johnson started. Bontemps

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<sup>76</sup> Including Jamaica, British Guiana, British Honduras, Barbados, Trinidad, Haiti, Martinique, French Guiana, Cuba, and Africa.

<sup>77</sup> Braithwaite is briefly mentioned in the preface (where Johnson is omitted): "The lines from these [early poets] to Dunbar and Braithwaite, to Hughes and Cullen and Donald Jeffrey Hayes, to Margaret Walker and Gwendolyn Brooks are not hard to draw" (ix).

<sup>78</sup> Bontemps and Hughes include "O Black and Unknown Bards," "Fifty Years," "The Creation," "The Glory of the Day Was in Her Face," "Sense you Went Away," "My City," and "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Only the ever-popular "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was not included in Johnson's 1931 collection.

and Hughes state that the word “Negro” in the “title of this volume has somewhat more reference to a theme and a point of view than to the racial identity of some of its contributors” (vii). For them, “Negro” is not an essential marker of identity. This is clear because some of the poets they include are white and, more importantly, because racial identity is fluid outside the U.S.: “Racial distinctions vary from country to country. Any effort to apply the yardstick of the United States to the other Americas is likely to confuse more than it clarifies” (vii). This approach puts them somewhere between Braithwaite’s and Johnson’s views. They conclude their preface with this statement:

The Negro in Western Civilization has been exposed to overwhelming historical and sociological pressures that are bound to be reflected in the verse he has written and inspired. The fact that he has used poetry as a form of expression has also brought him into contact with literary trends and influences. How one of these forces or the other has predominated and how the results may be weighed and appraised are among the questions to which the poetry itself contains answers. (ix)

Bontemps and Hughes ultimately choose to let the poetry decide and leave the role of the black poet up to the individual poets and their poetry.

Because the roots of this debate go back so far, it is no wonder that the conversation survives. In February of 2013, W.W. Norton & Co. came out with *Angles of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry*. This volume brings together poetry published since the 1960s and is glossed by the publishers as “not just another poetry anthology.”<sup>79</sup> Instead, the book

is a gathering of poems that demonstrate what happens when writers in a marginalized community collectively turn from dedicating their writing to political, social, and economic struggles, and instead devote themselves,

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<sup>79</sup> This is a common kind of phrase that many anthologists use to justify their new collection against earlier ones. Hughes sarcastically ascribes one to his and Bontemps’s 1949 anthology: “VERY FIRST ANTHOLOGY OF ITS KIND IN AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY” (Bontemps 248).

as artists, to the art of their poems and to the ideas they embody. These poets bear witness to the interior landscape of their own individual selves or examine the private or personal worlds of invented personae and, therefore, of human beings living in our modern and postmodern worlds.

The reaction to this new anthology shows that African-American poets and editors still disagree about this issue. Amiri Baraka responded to Norton's anthology in a review for the Poetry Foundation called "A Post-Racial Anthology?" In it, he expressed disbelief with what he found in the anthology and called it "imbecilic garbage!" and "embarrassing gobbledygook." Not only that, Baraka questions the motive for an anthology like this at all; in referring to the title, he says, "it sounds like some kind of social climbing. Ascent to where, a tenured faculty position?"<sup>80</sup> This new anthology is, for Baraka, "poppycock at its poppiest and cockiest." Baraka says, "The Black Arts spirit is old, it is historical, psychological, intellectual, cultural."<sup>81</sup> And he thinks Rowell's anthology is made up of "a mini-class of Blacks who benefited most by the civil rights and Black Liberation movements, thinking and acting as if our historic struggle has been won." Instead, Baraka believes African-American poetry should be about resistance.<sup>82</sup>

Whether we are looking at a poem like "The Athenaeum" or the "The White Witch," race is displayed in some way. When poems about race show up in an anthology, their meanings are reconfigured—for good or ill. For African-American poetry, these inclusions offer up interpretative space that goes beyond the poetry itself and tell a lot about the editors and about prevailing values. Even though it did not make him popular,

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<sup>80</sup> His comments are directed implicitly (and explicitly, later in the review) to the editor of the anthology, Charles Henry Rowell (Professor of English at Texas A&M and general editor of *Callaloo*).

<sup>81</sup> Some of this history is captured in Baraka's and Larry Neal's *Black Fire* anthology, which was released first in 1968 and again in 2007.

<sup>82</sup> Baraka references Henry Highland Garnet's 1843 call for "resistance, resistance, resistance."

Braithwaite did not feel obligated to write in expected modes. In fact, his decisions about self-identification put him far ahead of his time. By mid-century, Bontemps and Hughes were already distancing themselves from limiting the mode of production for African-American poets. Today, theorists like Anthony Appiah articulate what Braithwaite lived out so many years before. Appiah believes we should “live with fractured identities; engage in identity play; find solidarity, yes, but recognize contingency, and, above all, practice irony” (104). In many ways, Braithwaite prefigures Appiah and Rowell, and Johnson anticipates Baraka. The common thread in all of this, however, is the anthology form and the ways these editors changed how a New Verse anthology could be used. Braithwaite helped to define the limits and possibilities of the form, and Johnson expanded its influence and started a movement.

## CONCLUSION

### “REVISED AND ENLARGED”: MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY COMPREHENSIVE AND NEW VERSE ANTHOLOGIES

When I started college in 1996, I did not know much about Confucius, E.E. Cummings, or Ezra Pound. Even so, I found myself purchasing a poetry anthology that was edited by Ezra Pound called *Confucius to Cummings* (1964). I planned to read the book from start to finish, but I set it aside after reading only the Confucius poems and the excerpts from Homer’s *Odyssey* (exactly sixteen pages into the over three-hundred-page book, or fifteen poems of the over one hundred fifty printed). I underlined many lines from the poems I did read and left notes in the margins of the book, but there is no indication that I looked at the contents list or any other poems. Pound’s preface might have set me on the wrong course (assuming I read it). He writes, “If you pick up this anthology for idle pleasure you had better begin with Cummings or Whitman and read what you like. If the book is being used as a classroom text, you can start at the beginning, which may seem like a jumble of fragments” (ix). I wanted the knowledge the classroom reading strategy would provide but only had the commitment of an idle reader. Given unlimited time and energy, the volume might have given me the thorough introduction to poetry that I wanted. I could not have known it at the time, but I was reading Pound’s end-of-life comprehensive anthology of the best poetry of all time.

What would have been my responses had I happened upon Pound's experimental New Verse anthology *Des Imagistes* (1914) instead of the comprehensive *Confucius to Cummings*? What would Pound have communicated to me as an uninitiated reader?<sup>1</sup> Would Richard Aldington's lines from the first poem in *Des Imagistes* have drawn me in? "The ancient songs / pass deathward mournfully" ("Choricos" lines 1-2). These words communicate a welcoming, nostalgic sense, but the anthology as a whole, as we have seen, held its readers at arm's length. As exclusive as Pound's New Verse anthology was, it still managed to excite the outsiders it created, making them want to see behind the curtain. Pound's first anthology came out as American poetry was undergoing a massive change, and his last anthology tried to place the new poetry within the broader history of poetry. By describing the change in anthologies over time, this conclusion begins an examination into the ways modernist New Verse anthologies became less influential while comprehensive anthologies of modernist poetry proliferated. I follow the anthologies into the 1930s, '40s, and '50s to show the works that attempted to document the era, and I end by pointing out how the New Verse anthology was successfully used again in 1960 to crystalize yet another new movement.

### **Anthologizing Modernism**

Pound was always a teacher; his many anthologies are a testament to this. His first anthology, *Des Imagistes* (1914), perfectly shows the kind of teacher he was—one who pushed his students into uncomfortable places to force them to see poetry in new ways.

*Des Imagistes* offered no introduction, no explanation of poems, and an appendix filled

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<sup>1</sup> More research should be done to show how readers approach poetry anthologies. Someone ought to study multiple copies of one anthology and the reader interactions with it in the margins and paratext. Because of its popularity, various editions, and common use in schools, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* would be a particularly fruitful text to examine.

with confusing documents. And whether he was marking up other poets' manuscripts or writing colorful letters to would-be poets or fledgling editors, Pound was never concerned about offending his students. He was, however, deeply interested in giving them the best possible advice and showing them the very best poetry. In spite of his many faults and his oeuvre of seemingly incoherent poetry, Pound wanted readers to understand and experience all that poetry had to offer. Whether it was *Des Imagistes* or *Confucius to Cummings*, Pound put poetry before the American public in a way no other modern poetry editor did. The legacy of all of his collections (and his late poetry, especially the *Cantos*), demonstrates the length and breadth of a poetic mind that was most concerned with poetry and less concerned with either academia or the popular press.

In the years between his first and last anthologies, Pound published four other collections that met with various levels of success. He brought out the *Catholic Anthology* (1915) directly after *Des Imagistes* and probably hoped that his second New Verse anthology would replicate the success of the first. Because it was published in London during the beginning of the First World War, fewer readers were in the market for avant-garde poetry, and it did not attract very much attention in America, despite publishing poems that came to be important for modernism.<sup>2</sup> Though he had been thinking about creating another anthology for some time, his *Profile* (1932) anthology did not come out for fifteen years and was not economically or critically successful.<sup>3</sup> *Active*

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<sup>2</sup> The most conspicuous examples are Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady."

<sup>3</sup> Alan Tate wrote a review of *Profile* in the Nov. 1932 issue of *Poetry* that takes Pound's work to be less than stunning. Tate believed that the poems Pound selected for his anthology were "usually the worst by their authors; nor do they illustrate anything; nor does Mr. Pound attempt to define what he probably thinks they illustrate." He continues: "The anthology...moves one to ask, what kind of arrogance misled Pound



*Anthology* came out in 1933 and went through two printings but also did not attract much attention. These two anthologies—along with Aldington’s *Imagist Anthology* (1930) that I discuss below—show how the modernist New Verse anthology was no longer a viable form. In 1954, Pound published his translations of *Shih-ching: The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius*, which met with relative success and was reprinted five times in the next thirty years. All of these anthologies demonstrate Pound’s desire to publish anthologies that, as John Nichols states, create “a dynamic debate about the value of literary works and a continual re-creation of a literary canon” (184). When he published *Confucius to Cummings* in 1964, Pound presented the boundaries within which he thought this debate should take place.

For Pound, good poetry and good poetry anthologies converge in the *Cantos*. He obscures meaning for the consumption of the few while simultaneously referencing all the poetry he believes is important. As he does so, he makes explicit and implicit references to anthologies.<sup>4</sup> As John Gould Fletcher explained in 1932, “The *Cantos* as they stand are unquestionably the *selva oscura* of modern poetry. They are an anthology of all the passages in poetry of the past that Mr. Pound has been interested in (I might almost say that they are his *Golden Treasury*, but decency forbids)” (qtd. in Homberger

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into thinking that he is entitled to throw together some odds and ends of good verse and trash and call the lot an anthology?” (112).

<sup>4</sup> Because the *Cantos* encapsulate Pound’s entire poetic spectrum, it is unsurprising to find connections between *Des Imagistes* and parts of the *Cantos*. Many of the words and ideas in the six poems that he wrote for *Des Imagistes* find renewed attention in some way in the *Cantos*. Two lines in Canto VII (“Ione, dead the long year / My lintel and Liu Ch’e’s Lintel”), for example, allude to the subject of Pound’s earlier “Liu Ch’e” poem in *Des Imagistes*. Pound ends the earlier poem with: “A wet leaf that clings to the threshold” (line 6), but the lines in Canto VII elevate the leaf (a symbol of the poet’s dead wife) to the top of the doorway, thus revising and enlarging upon the first meaning.

237). The forest of the *Cantos* certainly is dark and obscure,<sup>5</sup> but it also brings together a vast collection of poetry from all eras of literary history. As early as 1917, Pound had been thinking about creating a comprehensive anthology to “replace that dodgish Palgrave” with a ten-volume anthology of world poetry (Stock 201). When the publisher rejected his idea, Pound expressed his anger that an inadequate anthology like the *Golden Treasury* would be allowed to continue representing the history of poetry. His Canto XXII demonstrates both of these realities:

And Mr. H.B. wrote in to the office:  
I would like to accept C.H.’s book  
But it would make my own seem so out of date.  
Heaven will protect  
The lay reader. The whole fortune of  
Mac Nippen and Company is founded  
Upon Paggrave’s *Golden Treasury*. Nel paradiso terrestre. (102)

Pound’s speaker shows a self-conscious fear of being outdone and keeps the book from being printed; he hopes that heaven will protect the reader, presumably from the speaker’s own bad poetry. Pound carried his concern for his proposed anthology into the *Cantos* to show how publishers value money over quality literature or what would most benefit the reading public. “The point,” as Tim Redman writes, “is obviously how entrenched interests prevent the circulation of new ideas” (253). Pound’s frustration with publishers’ actual interests then gives way to a concern to “protect” the common reader, making anthologies an ethical tool bordering on the spiritual (“Heaven will protect”). Pound believed that as long as the *Golden Treasury* remained popular, lay readers would

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<sup>5</sup> The poem is meant to disorient readers while subtly encouraging them to see poetry and history in ways they could not comprehend otherwise. Sacvan Bercovitch calls it a “poetry of criticism” that uses “fractured poetics” to communicate “complex impulses” (6, 136).

be deprived of the best poetry.<sup>6</sup> Of all the anthologies Pound created, then, *Confucius to Cummings* is most obviously his answer to the *Golden Treasury*. It seems that Pound had finally, after all his trying, created a twentieth-century anthology that might rival Palgrave's nineteenth-century *Golden Treasury*.<sup>7</sup>

Pound was not the only modernist who was busy collecting poetry during this time. Conrad Aiken tried his hand as an anthologist. His pocket-sized *Modern American Poets* (1922) was followed up by the comprehensive *American Poetry 1671-1928* (1928). Both of these books included poems by modern poets Aiken knew or had written about at some point. He also edited *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (1944), which, considering the contents and the timing, was a competitor of Louis Untermeyer's collections.<sup>8</sup> Richard Aldington also published a reunion collection called the *Imagist Anthology* (1930)—a volume that collected the current work of all the poets who were in the earlier Imagist anthologies. With the exception of Amy Lowell, who died in 1925, Pound was the only significant Imagist not to be included in the collection. Pound declined Aldington's invitation, perhaps because he was collecting his own poems for *Profile* (1932) and *Active Anthology* (1933), but it is at least obvious that the influence of the Imagist movement had passed, because Aldington's and Pound's anthologies were

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<sup>6</sup> Because Canto XXII was written sometime before 1930—a time that Pound was thinking about and collecting poems for *Profile* (1932) and *Active Anthology* (1933)—further research should examine these anthologies in detail to unearth the specifics behind Pound's concerns.

<sup>7</sup> There will probably never be a replacement for the *Golden Treasury*. Even so, Pounds collection got off to a strong start in the first two years after publication, quickly going through eighteen printings and two editions. After that, the archive does not clearly indicate how often it was printed.

<sup>8</sup> Aiken's collections were only marginally successful, going through two or three printings each: *Modern American Poets* (1922 & 1927), *American Poetry 1671-1928* (1928, 1929, and 1944), and *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (1944 and 1963).

popular and critical failures. With that said, Aldington's anthology still plays an essential role in showing how modernist works came to be canonical and should therefore be examined in further detail.

Louis Untermeyer is also well known for his comprehensive anthologies, *Modern American Poetry* (1919), *Modern British Poetry* (1920), and *Modern American and British Poetry* (1922). These anthologies, the third a popular combination of the first two, were wildly popular, selling thousands of copies and going into multiple editions.<sup>9</sup> His anthologies appeared in many schools, and he believed his project of disseminating poetry was vitally important. In 1935, he wrote, "Today...is the very time when poetry is most valuable. Never before in America have we needed it so desperately; never before is its healing and revitalizing power so definite" (qtd. in Harrington 42). Some of the successive editions added a few new poems, but Untermeyer mostly relied on famous modern poets like Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, H.D., William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore.<sup>10</sup> He published a number of other popular anthologies over the years, even paying homage to Palgrave with his *The New Treasury of Verse* (1932) and *The Golden Treasury of Poetry* (1959).<sup>11</sup> Untermeyer sold

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<sup>9</sup> *Modern American Poetry* was reprinted in 1921, 1925 (third edition), 1926, 1930, 1931 (fourth edition), 1932, 1936, 1942 (sixth edition), 1944, 1950 (seventh edition), 1958 (eighth edition), 1962 (ninth edition), 1964 (tenth edition), and 1969 (eleventh edition). *Modern British Poetry* was reprinted in 1921, 1925, 1930, 1936, 1942, 1950, 1958, 1962, 1964, and 1969 and went through five editions. The combination volume *Modern American and British Poetry* was also popular, coming out in 1922, 1923, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1942, 1944, 1955, and 1962 and going through three editions.

<sup>10</sup> He also included poets like Edwin Arlington Robinson, Edgar Lee Masters, Carly Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Conrad Aiken; old additions like Stephen Crane; and finally, virtual unknowns (at least to today's readers) like Edwin Markham, Charles E. S. Wood, Bliss Carman, and Madison Cawein.

<sup>11</sup> A few of the more popular were his *This Singing World: An Anthology of Modern Poems for Young People* (1923; nine printings and two editions), *American Poetry Since 1900* (1923; twelve printings), *Yesterday and Today: A Collection of Verse Mostly Modern* (1926; thirteen printings and two editions), *The*

an amazing number of anthologies by giving readers what they wanted (rather than what Pound would have thought they needed). This kind of approach to anthologizing poetry caused James Rother to say that Untermeyer and, after him, Oscar Williams, “strip-mined” the poetry market (Rother, “Part Two”).

At the same time that modern poetry was being used to sell volume after volume, academic editors began to use the same poetry in their classes and books. The most influential of these was Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren’s *Understanding Poetry*, which first came out in 1938, with revised editions appearing in 1950, 1960, and 1976. Though the book is a textbook, it is also importantly an anthology that places modern poets like Pound, Eliot, H.D., and Cummings (not to mention Brooks and Warren’s contemporaries John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate) among classic English poets. It is organized in six sections such as “Dramatic Situation,” “Tone,” and “Analogical Language,” which each ended with exemplary poems. The authors even use Imagism to introduce the section “Description: Images, Moods, and Attitudes.” The book, as Louise Cowan writes, ultimately did more than teach poetry; it came to “encapsulate the ideology of those who, frequently in disparagement, were branded the New Critics,” and the anthology became “a shot heard throughout the groves of Academe” (830). Though *Understanding Poetry* is most well known for its advocacy of close reading, the four editions are a study in and of themselves.<sup>12</sup> The changes between

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*New Treasury of Verse* (1932; two printings), and *The Golden Treasury of Poetry* (1959; sixteen reprints and two editions).

<sup>12</sup> Though Connor Byrne and Tara Lockhart address some of these changes in separate book chapters in *Rereading the New Criticism* (2012), many of the stark differences in the four editions ought to be explored further. The 1938, 1950, and 1960 editions, for instance, demonstrate the lack of foresight Brooks and Warren had about the importance of African-American poets. Though Langston Hughes, Claude McKay,

editions—especially from the first three to the 1976 edition—capture the dramatic changes in poetry and literary criticism in the almost forty years since the book’s first publication. For half a century or more, this particular comprehensive anthology influenced an untold number of professors, poets, and students.

In the 1940s and ’50s, the revolution in paperback books coincided with the growing popularity of Oscar Williams’s many anthologies.<sup>13</sup> Though Untermeyer’s three major anthologies were still being sold in new editions, Williams began to put together his own anthologies in the 1940s, with *New Poems* (1941), *War Poets* (1945), and *Little Treasury of Modern Poetry* (1946) being the most popular.<sup>14</sup> Williams did not become wildly popular until the 1950s, however, when he published his three best-selling anthologies: *Immortal Poems of the English Language* (1952), *The Golden Treasury of Best Songs and Lyrical Poems* (1953), and *The Pocket Book of Modern Verse* (1954).<sup>15</sup> These anthologies were marketed as collections that were “revised, enlarged, and brought

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James Weldon Johnson, Jean Toomer, and Gwendolyn Brooks were well known before the 1970s, these African-American poets did not appear in *Understanding Poetry* until the 1976 edition.

<sup>13</sup> In “Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* and the Paperback Revolution,” Bill Savage writes: “‘Paperback’—especially in the context of 1950s literary culture—is not just a neutral term for the material manifestation of a text. The paperback, like *Howl and Other Poems*, was both the product and the producer of a revolution in literary culture.” Many of Oscar Williams’s books that survive today are paperback versions. Also, Johnson’s *Book of American Negro Poetry* was first published as a paperback in 1959.

<sup>14</sup> These books went through at least four printings each. *Little Treasury of Modern Poetry* began the “Little Treasury” series, which included *Little Treasury of Great Poetry* (1946), *Little Treasury of American Poetry* (1947), *Little Treasury of World Poetry* (1947), and *Little Treasury of British Poetry* (1951). Apart from *Little Treasury of Modern Poetry*, none of these books in the series were ever reprinted.

<sup>15</sup> These books sold year after year and were reprinted often. *Immortal Poems* was reprinted almost every year from its publication until 1975 and went through a total of twenty-eight printings. *The Golden Treasury* was not as successful, but it was printed five times and went through two editions. *The Pocket Book of Modern Verse* was also reprinted almost every year until 1974, was printed twenty-five times, and came out in three different editions.

up to date” by including modernist and contemporary poets.<sup>16</sup> *Immortal Poems*, for example, printed the following names on the cover (with the editor’s own name shamelessly added): Shakespeare, Eliot, Milton, Frost, Whitman, Williams, [Gene] Derwood, Yeats, Auden, Keats, Burns, Hopkins, Thomas, Tennyson, and Wordsworth. *The Golden Treasury* includes a similar list of poets and a section of new poetry at the end of the volume. The cover of this volume also gathered old portraits together with images of new poets, juxtaposing poets like Shakespeare and Milton with Frost and Eliot among others. Of all the books Williams produced, the *Golden Treasury* provides a useful bookend to my project because it reprints Palgrave’s legendary volume, includes the modern poets discussed in this dissertation, and was published forty years after Pound started compiling *Des Imagistes*, the New Verse anthology that inspired modernist poets and editors to write and disseminate poems in a new and lasting way.

### **The Continuing Influence of New Verse Anthologies**

The 1950s were busy years for poetry anthologies, and the decade also recorded both the passing and arrival of different eras of American poetry. Anthologies like *Fifteen Modern American Poets* (1956) collected poets like Elizabeth Bishop, Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, Howard Nemerov, and Theodore Roethke. William Stanley Braithwaite’s final *Anthology of Magazine Verse* appeared to little notice in 1958.<sup>17</sup> And some of the students who were going to school during the dominance of *Understanding Poetry* began to write poetry in the 1950s. It was at the end of the decade that two era-defining anthologies appeared on the market: *New Poets of England and America* (1957), by

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<sup>16</sup> The phrase “revised, enlarged, and brought up to date” comes from the paperback cover of Williams’s 1961 edition of *The Golden Treasury of Best Songs and Lyrical Poems*.

<sup>17</sup> *Fifteen Modern American Poets* went through eight editions, with the last one coming out in 1967. Braithwaite’s *Anthology of Magazine Verse* was only printed once.

Donald Hall, Robert Pack, and Louis Simpson, and *The New American Poetry* (1960) by Donald Allen. Though critics have made much of the so-called “anthology war” between these two volumes, Allen’s collection has thrived and survived to be recognized as the marker of a paradigm shift in American poetry. The hugely influential *New American Poetry* (1960) made a largely unconnected but likeminded group of poets famous; Rother argues that the collection “ushered in the Big Bang of the Beat counterculture all by itself.” The poets included in the volume were not unlike the unknown Imagists of 1913 or the nascent Harlem Renaissance poets in 1922. All of these poets knew they were writing in new ways and were somehow a part of a nebulous association, but in each era, it took the power of the New Verse anthology to solidify their work into movements that the public would recognize and that future poets and readers could easily look back on with interest. The New Verse anthology form has the unique ability to capture the fervor of new movements and simultaneously preserve all of the important poets of the movement in one place. Because of this, the arc of modernist poetry can be traced in the New Verse anthologies that made the poetry famous. This dissertation only begins to examine the rich information available between the covers of these anthologies, which sit on library shelves waiting to be studied.



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## VITA

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